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49. 1656.



EXPOSITORY LECTURES.

PART I. **ON CHRISTIAN FAITH.**

PART II. **ON CHRISTIAN PRACTICE.**



WITH HIS GRACE'S PERMISSION.

A SELECTION

FROM

HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY'S

Library of Theological Studies

PRACTICAL EXPOSITION

OF

THE G O S P E L S,

OF THOSE PARTS MORE PARTICULARLY WHICH
REFER TO THE

FAITH AND PRACTICE OF A CHRISTIAN.

BY

THE REV. GEORGE WILKINSON, B.D.

RECTOR OF WHICHAM.



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—
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PREFACE.

A SELECTION from the works of a living Divine, by any other than the author himself, is so unusual an event, that some account seems necessary of the motives which led to the undertaking of the present publication.

Having been accustomed, for some years, to read, or hear read, at family devotions, the Expository Lectures of my right Reverend Diocesan; and being strongly impressed with the persuasion that nothing more appropriate could be used on such an occasion, I ventured to suggest to his Lordship, that a selection from the four volumes of the Gospels, adapted to the means and opportunities of numbers for whom the larger work might seem not so well adapted, would be invaluable.

His Lordship's reply, condescending, and kind, and disinterested, as usual, intimated a ready acquiescence in any plan which might make his works more extensively

conducive to the spiritual welfare of the community, and his free consent that they might forthwith be used for the purpose pointed out. And thus a great door and effectual was unexpectedly opened unto me—an opportunity of building on a foundation laid by a wise master-builder, and of thereby enabling “the poor among men to rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.”

May the blessing of Him, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, attend this manual, and render it subservient to the best interests of many, even of all into whose hands it may come.

G. W.

MARCH, 1849.

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EXPOSITORY LECTURES.

PART I.

ON CHRISTIAN FAITH.

EXPOSITORY LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

THE EARTHLY LINEAGE OF JESUS.

MATT. i. 1—17.

THE Gospel according to St. Matthew is the first known record of the ministry of Jesus Christ, and is supposed to have been written about eight years after his ascension. The author was an “eye-witness of his majesty.”¹ For that equally applies to him, which St. John writes concerning himself: “We beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father.”²

That he might first behold this glory, and afterwards bear witness to it, Matthew, or, as he was also called, Levi, was summoned from a very different occupation. He was a Publican, a collector of taxes; and was exercising this secular vocation, “sitting at the receipt of custom,”³ when “Jesus saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.” From that period he attended Him throughout his ministry, and now testifies the things which he had seen and heard.

He begins with an account *of the generation* or descent of Jesus from Abraham and David.

¹ 2 Pet. i. 16.

² John i. 14.

³ Matt. ix. 9.

1. *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.*

As much as to say, Before relating the history of the Lord Jesus, it is proper to show that his birth agreed with the promise given to our forefathers, to "Abraham and his seed for ever."⁴ For to Abraham was the promise made, that in "his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed."⁵ And of David it had been declared, "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations."⁶ So that the Jews, expecting the Messiah, always expected Him to be "of the house and lineage of David." When the Lord inquired of the Pharisees, "saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? they say unto him" at once, "The Son of David."⁷

This, therefore, was to be shown, that Jesus was descended from Abraham and from David. And the genealogy recorded by St. Matthew proves that Joseph, the husband of Mary, and the reputed father of Jesus, was born in the direct line of Abraham and David. On the other hand, St. Luke, writing afterwards, traces the descent of Mary the mother;⁸ and shows that in this respect also the line was exactly kept, and that *Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham*, answered all the expectations of the Jewish people concerning "him who should come," and "should redeem Israel."

Thus "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The promise now to be fulfilled had been made to Abraham more than eighteen hundred years before. Meanwhile, "many prophets and righteous men" were anxiously desiring to see the things foretold; to understand more clearly the mysteries of which they

⁴ Luke i. 55.

⁵ Gen. xii. 3.

⁶ Ps. lxxxix. 4, 5.

⁷ Matt. xxii, 41.

⁸ Luke iii. 23—38.

spoke ; to unfold the volume which to themselves was sealed up, but was to be open to future ages.

And now, in the providence of God, the season was arrived when God saw fit to unlock the secrets of prophecy, and to show what lay concealed under Isaiah's encouraging words: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and ye that have no money ; come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price."⁸ He should now appear in the world, who should realize this gracious invitation, and say, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."¹ And it would be seen, that "heaven and earth might pass away," but not one of the promises of God should ever fall to the ground, till all be fulfilled.

LECTURE II.

BIRTH OF JESUS.

MATT. i. 18. LUKE i. 26—38.

18. "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost."

ST. LUKE writes more fully:² "The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David ; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with

⁸ Isa. lv. 1.

¹ Matt. xi. 28.

² Luke i. 26—38.

God. The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest : and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David : And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever ; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Thus was explained the prophecy of Isaiah, " Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel :"³ " God with us : " God in our nature ; and yet justly distinguished as *the Son of the Highest*, because born without the intervention of an earthly father.

We readily perceive why this was so ordained. Had the Saviour, whom God designed for the redemption of the world, been born as other infants, the offspring of marriage, He might have been the chosen of God ; He might have been the greatest of those born of women ; He might have *reigned over the throne of David for ever* ; God might have given Him a name above every earthly name ; He might have delegated to Him the power of a conqueror, and the authority of a lawgiver ; but He could not have been properly styled "*the Son of the Highest*," "*the Son of God*." Neither could He have made satisfaction for our sins. His nature, derived from what was corrupt, would have been itself imperfect, and could not atone for the imperfection and corruption of others. " Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens :"⁴ so that those who trust in Him should have ground for confidence,

³ Isa. vii. 14. Matt. 1. 22. The prophecy of Isaiah had been immediately fulfilled in its primary application : this was its complete accomplishment.

⁴ Heb. vii. 26.

that they have committed their souls to one who "is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him," being Himself "God over all, blessed for evermore."

Again, the eternal Word, instead of taking the substance of a human mother, like the children of Adam, might doubtless have descended from heaven, and assumed the form of man, and "dwelt among us," as many suppose that he will hereafter do in a personal reign of a thousand years; but in that case he would not have been man, man in our own nature, and subject to our infirmities. There would not have been before mankind the example of one exposed to our wants, suffering our trials, submitting to our pains; "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."⁵ Therefore, "wisdom is justified of all her children," in the supernatural dispensation which is here disclosed to Mary. And her conduct, which is different from that of Zacharias, exhibits true confidence in God. The Jewish people, and Mary amongst them, were expecting one who should *rule over the house of Jacob for ever*. The angel declares to her, that *the power of the Highest* shall be exercised, and that *that holy thing should be born* of her, not the son of her espoused Joseph, but *the Son of God*. She could not doubt the appearance of the angel, and why should she doubt his words? *For with God nothing shall be impossible.*

Her example may teach us to receive this great truth—*with God nothing shall be impossible*,—and to stagger not at his promises through unbelief. Those promises are clear, that "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." Our business is to say, in Mary's humble temper, *Behold the servants of the Lord; Be it unto us according to his word.*

⁵ Heb. iv. 15.

LECTURE III.

NAME AND BIRTH OF JESUS.

MATT. i. 21—23.

21. "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name
JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

THE word Jesus was a name in frequent use among the Jews, and simply means a saviour. It was particularly assigned to him who succeeded Moses in leading the people of Israel into the promised land of Canaan. We call him Joshua; but the name is exactly the same as that of Jesus: and is so written, Acts vii. 45, and Heb. iv. 8.

Such was the meaning of the name; a deliverer, a saviour: and it was given to the Son now born into the world, because it described the character which He should bear, and the office which He should perform. *To save his people from their sins* is mentioned as the purpose of his great undertaking, and of his long-expected coming.

It is assumed, then, that this was what the world most wanted, and ought to be most grateful for. And we know it was so: Scripture acquaints us, that "in Adam all died;" that "by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" "and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."¹ Since, therefore, "judgment had come upon all men to condemnation," what the world required was a DELIVERER from that judgment. Jesus came to be such a DELIVERER: not in the sense in which Moses and Joshua were deliverers: but in a sense as different as his birth was different from theirs: He came "to give his life a ransom for many;" to "suffer once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."²

¹ Rom. v. 12, &c.

² 1 Pet. iii. 18,

But the world required something more ;—required to be delivered not only from the fatal consequences of sin, but from sin itself. This too is a part of the salvation brought by Jesus. It was for this salvation that St. Paul gave thanks to God. After lamenting the natural state of man,—that “in him (that is, in his flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for the good that he would he does not, but the evil which he would not, that he does”—he “thanks God,” who has delivered him “from the body of this death through Jesus Christ our Lord.”³ To this power he trusted, saying, “I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.”⁴ For he had been assured, and believed the promise, “My grace is sufficient for thee.”⁵

Such is the fulfilment of that gracious purpose announced in the name of Jesus: *He saves his people from their sins*: He saves them from the guilt of sin by his blood; and by the power of his Holy Spirit He saves them from the dominion of sin.

The miraculous birth here related, which makes Jesus, emphatically, the SON OF GOD, had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah.

22. “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

23. “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

The purpose for which God thus vouchsafed to be “with us,” to dwell among men, to live and die in our nature, must have been no light purpose. And it was no light purpose to *save his people from their sins*. For “the wages of sin is death;” “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish;” “the blackness of darkness for ever.”

Is He such a DELIVERER to us? He must be, if we belong to the number of *his people*; and if we do

³ Rom. vii. 18—25.

⁴ Phil. iv. 13.

⁵ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

not belong to the number of his people, He is "dead in vain; we are yet in our sins." And we have the means at hand of answering the important question, whether, or not, we do belong to the number of his people. This same sentence which declares to us the office which Christ was designed to perform, enables us to perceive our own condition in respect to Him. Has He delivered you from sin itself? If so, He has delivered you from its penalty.

But you will say,—no man is altogether freed from sin: for "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Certainly, this is what Scripture declares and our own hearts bear witness to. But though the corruption of nature adheres to the sincerest Christian, still he is not under the power of sin as others are; he does not yield to it, but strives against it; he does not indulge it, but mortifies it; he does not love it, but abhors it; he does not desire it, but aspires after more and more holiness, and a more complete renewal of his heart in the image of God. As St. Paul has expressed it, "sin has no more dominion over you."

If then this is your case; if you have so believed your Saviour, as to be convinced that sin, unless you forsake it, must destroy you; and if, in reliance upon his Spirit, you have renounced it, and are resolved to give it no place in your hearts, and are daily contending against it: then He has fulfilled that promise for you, of which his name is the pledge;—He was called *Jesus*, for *He should save his people from their sins*.

Observe, on the other hand, that the same title which brings comfort to the disciples of Christ, speaks the sentence of condemnation to the unrepenting transgressor. *He shall save his people from their sins*. Let the transgressor reflect. He has not saved *me* from sin; therefore I cannot be one of his people. *From sin* He is ready to save; even He cannot save

those who "continue *in sin*." He has himself declared that at the last day He will reply to all such,—“I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

May God give us grace to know our real state, and deliver us alike from thoughtless security, from vain presumption, and from perplexing fears.

LECTURE IV.

MARY'S HYMN OF THANKSGIVING.

LUKE i. 46—50.

46. "And Mary said, *My soul doth magnify the Lord,*
 47. "And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
 48. "For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
 49. "For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.
 50. "And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation."

IN the hymn of Mary here, as afterwards in those of Zacharias and Simeon, the Holy Ghost has put into the mouths of these servants of God words suited to their own situation in the first place, but also suited to God's people in all ages. The thoughts which they uttered have on that account been used by the Church to express the devotional feelings and thanksgivings which belong to every Christian.

When Mary says, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour*; and that, because He had *regarded her low estate*; she only utters what all have equal reason to express, to whom the mystery of godliness is revealed. For so St. Peter describes the Christian's feelings towards the Redeemer: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice

with joy unspeakable and full of glory."¹ The Christian rejoices in God his Saviour, as being to him all that he most needs and desires, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." He rejoices, as the debtor, released from his obligations by the bounty of a disinterested benefactor, would rejoice in the name of him through whom he was enjoying his daily freedom. He rejoices, as a criminal at the mention of the intercessor to whose favour he is indebted for liberty and life. If we can realize to ourselves what these would feel, we can understand how our spirit ought to rejoice in God our Saviour. But we have still further reason to rejoice in Him, as strengthening and refreshing our souls day by day. He has not only relieved those who trust in Him from the consequences of past transgression, but enables them to live as those who are "redeemed from all iniquity:" He is not only the benefactor who has purchased their freedom, but He gives them power to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith He hath made them free from the law of sin and death." So that, whether the Christian looks to the natural condition out of which he is raised, or to the gracious condition in which he is placed, or to the hope which is set before him, he has perpetual cause to say, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour.*

The hymn proceeds to notice the unexpected way in which the Almighty had shown his mercy to one *who feared Him, and done great things* for a woman of *low degree*, whom *from henceforth all generations should call blessed*, while the rich and powerful had been passed by.

51. "He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

52. "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

¹ 1 Pet. i. 8.

53. "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

54. "He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;

55. "As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever."

To this meek and humble virgin, it appeared a subject of wonder and thankfulness that God had chosen her to be the instrument of fulfilling his gracious design: He had scattered the lofty imaginations of the proud, and put down the mighty, and had exalted one of lowly station. This however is, prophetically, a description of the whole Gospel dispensation. It is in its character humbling. *It puts down the mighty from their seats of pre-eminence and security, and levels them in the dust before God.* Are they to be really secure?—they must have peace with God through Jesus Christ. Are they to be really strong?—they must be strong in faith. Are they to be truly rich?—they must be "rich in good works." So too must the proud, the self-righteous, descend from the imaginations of their hearts, and cease to justify themselves before God, as if they were "not as other men are;" but must consent to pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The Gospel has nothing for those "who have need of nothing;"² it sends empty away all that in their own conceit are "rich and increased with goods;" but it *fills the hungry with good things*: it supplies those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness," with rules for godliness, with the knowledge of God's commands, with grace to "will and to do," with a comfortable hope of divine favour. Therefore, "let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low:"³ low in his own esteem, but great, through faith, in the sight of God. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."⁴

² See Rev. iii. 17.

³ James i. 9.

⁴ Isa. lvii. 15.

Such would be the effect of that dispensation which was now about to be revealed. And in revealing it, God had *remembered his mercy*: had fulfilled the covenant which, in the beginning, He had made to *Abraham and his seed for ever*. So long a period had passed since it had been first promised that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head,⁵ and that in Abraham all the families of the earth should be blessed, that it might appear as if God had forgotten to be gracious, and shut up his loving-kindness in displeasure. But now He had *remembered his mercy*, and holpen his servant Israel.

And this may be our confidence, in regard to all the promises of God. They are delayed, only that they may be more surely and completely fulfilled. *His mercy is on them that fear Him throughout all generations*. And sooner or later, those that now may "go on their way weeping," and "sow in tears, shall reap in joy." "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

LECTURE V.

NATIVITY OF JESUS ANNOUNCED TO SHEPHERDS BY ANGELS.

LUKE ii. 8—14.

8. "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.
9. "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.
10. "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
11. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
12. "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

THE expectation of the Messiah was so general amongst the Jews, that, even to these men of humble

⁵ Gen. iii. 15; xii. 2.

education, it was no strange thing to hear announced the birth of a Saviour. Moses, however, and Joshua, had been saviours, deliverers of the people; yet themselves were frail and sinful men. He, to whom the title was now given, is distinguished as *Christ*, the anointed One. But kings and priests were anointed on entering upon their high office: therefore He was more: He was *Christ, the Lord*: He was himself God, who "was with God in the beginning." The prophecy had been uttered: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given:" "and his name shall be called the Mighty God." That prophecy had now been accomplished: and because He was the Lord, whatever He had undertaken He was able to perform: and his birth was a subject of congratulation, was *good tidings of great joy*, both to those who first received the announcement, and to *all people*. "For God had sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved."

Whatever men will think of this, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear," there were those—those who were best able to appreciate its importance—who were watching the whole plan of mercy with joyful interest.

13. "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
14. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

This short hymn declares, in few words, the effect of that great event which had come to pass, the Incarnation of the Son of God. It brought, first, *glory* to God in the highest, because it eminently displays the attributes which belong to God. It displays his JUSTICE, which takes account of man's character, and discriminates between righteousness and unrighteousness, between obedience and disobedience. It displays his MERCY: for, though He "will by no means clear the guilty," He is still "long-suffering and gracious:" He has provided a ransom, by which the penitent may be absolved; and,

as "by one man's offence judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." ¹ It displays his WISDOM: for by showing, in one example, his hatred of sin, and his mercy towards the sinner, He brings his adopted children to obedience, by all the ties of fear, and gratitude, and love; and purifies unto Himself a peculiar people, redeemed from all iniquity.

Therefore do the angels sing, *Glory to God in the highest!* "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

The next result of the Incarnation is, *Peace on earth*. Peace between man and his Creator, between the sinner and his Judge; a state of sure and solid peace, such as may satisfy the most inquiring, and comfort the most fearful soul. True, man is corrupt and sinful, owing a large debt to God. But if a friend has discharged the debt, the debtor can face his creditor without alarm. Christ is that friend. He, by his one offering of Himself once offered, has made a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. The benefit of this satisfaction, which is freely proposed to all, we take to ourselves by faith. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ." By Him the covenant of *peace on earth* was mercifully ratified. He is the "Prince of Peace," the appointed Mediator of reconciliation.

The last blessing revealed by the angels, as assured by the coming of Christ, is God's *good-will towards men*. For what was the object of Christ's coming? That He might "suffer for our sins, the just for the unjust." God has indeed displayed his good-will, by the nature of his message; calling men to repentance, and offering them pardon. He has displayed it by the bearer of this message; "even his beloved Son." He has *displayed* it by the purpose of this message; the

¹ Rom. v. 21.

sanctification of our hearts, their restoration to his love, their conformity to his will, their preparation for a heavenly kingdom. This is indeed *good-will towards men*; this raises man's condition in the world; exalts the meek and humble, how mean soever their degree, and sets them but a little lower than the angels.

How, then, ought we to feel towards the possessor of this glory, the author of this peace, the instrument of this good-will? How ought we to feel towards Him who so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that all that believe in him might not perish? How ought we to feel towards the Lord, who "bought us," and "washed us from our sins in his own blood?"

Surely our first and latest thought should be, to secure this inestimable blessing to ourselves, and to prove our gratitude towards Him who has called us to enjoy it. Yes; "worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."²

LECTURE VI.

TESTIMONY OF GOD TO HIS SON.

LUKE iii. 21, 22.

21. "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,

22. "And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased."

THUS Jesus also was baptized. He insisted upon submitting to the ordinance, though "John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee: and comest thou to me?"¹ He chose to give this testimony

² Rev. v. 12, 13.

¹ Matt. iii. 14.

to the importance of a rite, which was to be the future entrance into his religion. And God confirmed the testimony, and declared by a voice from heaven, that this was He of whom Moses and the prophets had written, whom the nation had been so long expecting, and who was now come to fulfil the promise made to Abraham and his seed for ever. *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

A testimony so important should be carefully weighed, and the consideration of it may help to fix and settle our faith. What was there in the character of Christ, which the Father thus solemnly approves?

His Incarnation had two great objects. First, to make an atonement for sin, and reconcile man to God. And, secondly, to give a rule of righteousness, inculcated by his precepts, and illustrated by his example.

And with the Son, in his two-fold character, as a sacrifice of sin, and an example of righteousness, the Father declares himself *well pleased*.

1. He was well pleased with him as a sacrifice for sin. He was well pleased, that "mercy and truth should meet together, that righteousness and peace should kiss each other." His justice was satisfied by the proof held up to all the universe, that "the wages of sin is death." And the mercy which He delights in was gratified by the deliverance of the penitent offender. He was "in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," and saying to all who have ears to hear, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

2. But, further, God was well pleased with his beloved Son, now "manifest in the flesh," as a pattern of perfect righteousness. It is the nature of God to delight in holiness. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty." Our reason tells us that it must be so: and Scripture confirms what our reason tells us,

and shows throughout, that sin is "the abominable thing which He hates:" that He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity: that perfect goodness is inseparable from his own nature: and that his creatures, who are in the world, the nearer they approach to goodness, are more and more the objects of his regard and favour. Now, the Lord Jesus was altogether holy. His enemies could find no fault in Him: He was without spot of sin: and He displayed in his life and conversation an example of unblemished purity; an example of uninterrupted godliness; an example of meekness, of courteousness, of patience, and forgiveness; an example of universal love and charity; an example of unwearied diligence in the service of God.

This character was not merely described or recommended, but seen and practised in the life of the Lord Jesus. "Tempted in all points like as we are, he was yet without sin:" when He was reviled, He reviled not again: when He suffered, He threatened not: the mind that was in Him was of one "meek and lowly of heart." Armed with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," He resisted the devil, and the devil fled from Him. The principle on which He lived and acted was the glory of God, and the love of man. And with this example of perfect and unspotted righteousness, God declares Himself well pleased.

Such was the ground of that testimony, which God now gave publicly to the character of his beloved Son. And the voice came not on account of Him, but for our sakes, that we might learn to contemplate that character, and approve it too.

1. God was well pleased that his Son should pay the price of our redemption, and reconcile us to Himself. Are we also well pleased with this? Are we willing to confess, that in ourselves we have nothing to plead or claim, but must receive "eternal life as the gift of God, through Jesus Christ?" If not, our mind, and the mind of God, do not agree: we must look

closer into ourselves, closer into the holy law of God, and closer into that judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed ; and so learn to thank God, that " by grace we are saved, through faith ; not of works, lest any man should boast."² We must receive Christ under the character in which He is revealed to us, as the Saviour, the Redeemer.

2. God, however, was well pleased with Christ, not only as a propitiation for sin, but also as a pattern of righteousness. And He will be pleased with the disciples of Christ, in proportion as they follow that pattern. They were redeemed for this especial purpose, that they might become " a peculiar people, zealous of good works : " might imitate Him, whose " meat and drink it was to do the will of his heavenly Father." As He, " for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame," so must we " walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," and " set our affections on things above."

He who declared Himself well pleased with his beloved Son, has also declared Himself well pleased with those who thus receive Him : receive Him as their Priest to atone, and as their King to rule. For He says of them, " I will receive you, and be a Father unto you ; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

² Eph. ii. 8, 9.

LECTURE VII.

JESUS DECLARES, AT NAZARETH, THE PURPOSE OF HIS INCARNATION.

LUKE iv. 16—19.

16. "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.
17. "And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,
18. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,
19. "To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."¹

By the custom of the Jewish law, those designated of God for a high and sacred office were anointed with oil (1 Samuel x. 1). "Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it on the head of Saul, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?" Jesus was anointed, not by the type of the Spirit, but by the Spirit himself. *The Spirit of the Lord had anointed him.* He was "THE CHRIST, the Son of the living God."

And he seizes this occasion, at the entrance of his ministry, and in the place where He had been brought up, to declare for what purpose He was come. It was not to give fresh sanction to the laws of God: though He did sanction them, declaring, that whoever should break one of the least commandments, and should teach men so, should be accounted least in the kingdom of heaven. Neither did He come to denounce "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil," and to promise "eternal life to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immor-

¹ Isa. lxi. 1—3.

tality." Though this He also did, and made it the foundation of all his teaching. But this might have been performed by another Moses, or another Samuel, who should speak as the Spirit directed, and prove the truth of their commission, like the apostles, "by signs following."

But the purpose, for which the Son of God came, was one which He alone could execute. And the message which He brought derives a tenfold importance from the messenger. He came with a message of reconciliation from God to his guilty creatures. So God loved the world, that He sent his only Son, to reconcile the world unto Himself: nay, to pay the price of reconciliation; to make a propitiation for sin; that as many as believe in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. This *preaching the acceptable year of the Lord*, would be to the broken and contrite spirit, what the trumpet which proclaimed the year of jubilee had formerly been to the slave, and the prisoner, and the debtor among the Israelites.* That proclamation cancelled debts, and gave slaves their freedom. This proclamation would cancel the debt of the ten thousand talents which the sinner owes to God, and so set his heart at ease. It would *heal the broken-hearted: deliver the captive: recover sight to the blind: set at liberty them that are bruised*. Such was too often the misery under which the captives of old time laboured: their imprisonment was hopeless: their eyes were blinded: they were bruised with fetters; the iron entered into their soul. And under all these miseries would the captives of Satan labour: blindness was come upon them: they were tied and bound with the chain of their sins: they would look for deliverance in vain. But the Gospel announces to such captives, Be of good cheer: God has found a ransom. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." Continue in his word, "and ye shall know

* See Levit. xxv. 8.

the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The *broken-hearted* may rejoice ; God offers them the covenant of peace. The *poor hear glad tidings* ; God careth for them. *The captives are delivered* ; for greater is He that is with us, than he that is in the world. *The blind recover sight* ; for he that believes in Christ "shall not abide in darkness." *The bruised are set at liberty* ; for He "will heal them of their wounds, saith the Lord." *The acceptable year of the Lord is come* ; for He hath sent his beloved Son, to announce a message of mercy to his rebellious children.

This, then, is the purpose for which Christ was anointed, and the purpose which He alone could execute : for He alone could say, "Fear not ; I am the first and the last ; I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and death."*

LECTURE VIII.

THE DIVINITY OF THE WORD, OR SON OF GOD, DECLARED.

JOHN i. 1—3.

1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2. "The same was in the beginning with God.
3. "All things were made by him ; and without him was not anything made that was made."

THE disciples of Christ had been already furnished, by the other writers of his history, with a sufficient account of his birth, and ministry, and the various circumstances of his life. These had described His miracles, had related his discourses : not all that He did, nor all that He said ; but all that the Holy Spirit knew to be needful, in order that every sincere inquirer

* Rev. i. 18.

might be satisfied with truth, and instructed in doctrine : might possess all things “ that pertain to life and godliness.”

But it still remained to show WHO HE WAS who had said and done these things. They who believed in Him, considered Him to be the expected Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel. The Apostles had from the first perceived and acknowledged this : “ Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” But who, and of what nature, was THE CHRIST? Was he a created being, like the angel which appeared to Daniel and to Mary? And in what sense is that term to be understood, THE SON OF GOD? For even Adam is so called, as having had no earthly father.¹

Here, however, St. John plainly declares, that He, who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, was no created being : is not called the Son of God in any ordinary sense ; but was possessed, in his own nature, of all the properties which essentially belong to God. It might have been otherwise, for any thing that appears. The Almighty might have endued with such a spirit as Jesus possessed, or with power like that which He displayed, another being who should be born as Jesus was born :—nothing resembling it ever had been seen, but there is nothing incredible in conceiving it ;—and men might have supposed it, and some probably did suppose it. St. John here assures us in clear terms that it was not so. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* In the beginning of all things, in the beginning of time, from all eternity, He *was*, He existed, who had now taken upon Himself the nature of man. Wherever God was, He was : partaking of the same everlasting, uncreated nature. And therefore He is here described under a new term, *the Word*. That which passes our comprehension, because we have never seen or known the like, must

¹ Luke iii. 38.

be expressed to us by some term which is familiar to us, and we do understand. And therefore the *Son of God* is here represented as the *Word* of God. The word of a man discloses his thoughts, explains his mind, declares his will. The thoughts, the mind, the will of God and of his "beloved Son," are one. And accordingly Christ may properly be represented as the Word of God. For it is He who makes known to us God's counsels and purposes, and has been to us as his word.*

But we are told more still. *All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made.* All things were made by Him, not independently of the Father, but in union with the Father. We know, from the book of Genesis, that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." And we are here informed that, in this exercise of his power, the agent, the counsellor, was the Son, the Word, "who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." And so the Apostle understands it: saying to the Ephesians and Hebrews, that "God created all things by Jesus Christ:" whom He hath appointed heir of all things, and by whom also He made the worlds."³

Here we can know nothing, beyond what God reveals to us. Our reason tells us, that there must have been ONE from the beginning, ONE "before all things, and by whom all things consist."

Our reason agrees with the words of the Psalmist, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy

* The plainest reason why this essential Son of God is styled *the Word* seems to be this: that as our words are the interpretation of our mind to others, so was the Son of God sent to reveal his Father's mind to the world.—WHITBY.

³ Eph. iii. 9. Heb. i. 2.

hands." But more than this we know not. We cannot "by searching find out" the nature or person of the Creator; and we can do no more than bow before Him, and say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Thou hast created all things for thy pleasure. Yet would any have supposed this, who looked at the state of the world when Jesus came; who saw the thing made, ignorant of Him who made it; who saw the creature estranged from his Creator? He, therefore, who had at first formed the earth for the use of man, and man to inhabit it, interposes once more. He who had said at first, "Let us make man after our own image, in our likeness;" now says again, Let us restore man to that image which he has lost, to that likeness which sin has defaced and deformed. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken:" hath spoken unto us by His Son, even by Him who *was in the beginning with God, and was God*. And if you hearken to his call, and obey his word, the revelation here made by St. John is the strong foundation of your hope and comfort. He to whom you have fled, He in whom you have sought refuge from the wrath to come, is "God over all, blessed for ever;" and His greatness is your security. He who offers salvation is not, as some pretend, a prophet endowed with authority to reveal God's will, but still a mere man, of nature like your own; but is He who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Why should we deface the Scripture, blot out its clearest characters, and write it as it were anew, (as we must, if we endeavour to clear it from the divinity of Christ,) and so make a vain attempt to disprove this truth, this precious and consoling truth? For is there not solid comfort in the thought? True, *He is man*, with our nature to pity; but then He is

also God, with infinite power to save. Such is the ground of the Apostle's confidence. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is now at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

To Him then bring your wants, He is merciful to relieve; to Him disclose your fears, He is powerful to strengthen; on Him lay the burthen of your sins, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." For *he was in the beginning with God, and was God; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.*

LECTURE IX.

THE WORD DECLARED TO BE THE LIGHT AND LIFE OF THE SOUL OF MAN.

JOHN i. 4, 5.

4. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
5. "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

ST. JOHN had before declared that the eternal Word, whose incarnation is the subject of his Gospel, had been one with the Father from the beginning: and that "without Him was not any thing made that was made." He now adds, *In Him was life*. On Him life depended, and is by Him imparted and communicated. "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself: so the Son quickeneth whom he will."¹

But *the life* here spoken of is something more than that which was "breathed into man's nostrils, and he became a living soul."² The life was the light of men. It is the spiritual, and not the natural life

¹ Chap. v. 26, 21.

² Gen. ii. 7.

which is the light of man. And this life is in the Son, and is by Him shed abroad upon the heart. Accordingly, in one of his epistles, this same Evangelist describes Him as "the Word of life" (i. 1, 3): "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of *the Word of life*, that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you." And justly is He so termed, who generates in the soul a new existence, springing up to immortality. He is to the soul, what light is to the body of man. If the eye be without light, how great is the darkness! But darker still the soul, without that light which proceeds from the Son of God, and enables it to answer the purposes for which it was created, and endued with understanding.

Some seeds of this divine life, some sparks of this heavenly light, had always been scattered in the world. As it is in nature; before the actual rising of the sun, certain beams of light are visible, and, however inadequate to all our wants, serve many useful purposes; so was it with that spiritual light which had now fully risen. It had long been glimmering in dim and partial rays, before the prophet's words received their certain accomplishment, before it could be said of Jerusalem, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."³

It was by that earlier light that some of the heathen, wiser than their fellows, and emerging out of the general ignorance, were led to "seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him." As certain of their poets said, "For we are also his offspring." Led by this light, they worshipped the powers which they perceived to be above them, though they worshipped they knew not what: so that Paul, as he "passed by and beheld their devotions, found an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God."⁴

³ Isa. lx. 1.

⁴ Acts xvii. 27, 28.

⁵ Acts xvii. 23.

And much further would that light have conducted them, if they had not too often quenched it, because they "did not like to retain God in their knowledge."⁶

Still more particularly among the Jewish people *this life was the light of men*. Many had come to the light; had received life, had feared God, and wrought righteousness, "looking for glory, and honour, and immortality." It was by this light that "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." It was by this light that Enoch walked with God: that Abraham obeyed the call of God, and left his country and his kindred, looking for a better habitation, eternal in the heavens. It was by this light that Moses was enabled to look beyond the pleasures of sin for a season, which he might have enjoyed at the court of Pharaoh, and "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." It was by this light that many prophets and righteous men, "of whom the world was not worthy, died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."⁷

But still there was too just cause to say, as St. John goes on to add, *The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not*. The law was but "a shadow of good things to come,"⁸ and could not be compared with "the very image of the things," which had now been manifested to the world. Prophecy was as "a light than shineth in a dark place:"⁹ and even they, who uttered it, desired to see the things which were now seen, and had not seen them: "inquired and searched diligently, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."¹⁰ The

⁶ Rom. i. 28.

⁸ Heb. x. 1.

⁷ See Heb. xi. 4, 5, 8, 26, 13.

⁹ 2 Pet. i. 19.

¹⁰ 1 Pet. i. 11.

task scheme undertaken by the Son of God, when He came to "give His life a ransom for many," could be but obscurely perceived and imperfectly understood, before the facts interpreted the predictions. The state of man in regard to the things of God, in regard to present times and future prospects, is exactly described in this expressive verse. *The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.* Certain rays were discovered amid the general gloom, which glimmered, and shed forth a partial light, but did not disperse the darkness. There was not total ignorance, yet there was no clear knowledge.

It is a melancholy thought, that this description too well suits even the present condition of the world, which is now "without excuse." "The times of that ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." The dim light, the uncertain knowledge of the Jewish patriarchs, could not be imputed to them as sin. But, alas! what must we now say for the wilful darkness of those who close their eyes against the light, which shines in all its lustre? How does the account here given by St. John of the Redeemer, condemn their indifference and apathy. He has himself said, "If I had not come and spoken unto you, ye had not had sin; but now ye have no cloke for your sin."

He who was in the beginning with God, and was God, undertakes the salvation of mankind; proposes a mighty scheme, determined "from the foundation of the world;" gives intimation beforehand, by the mouth of "holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" sends rays of prophetic light as messengers to prepare the way before Him, and warn men to be on the watch for the "brightness of his rising." Till at last "the Sun of righteousness" is fully displayed, "with healing on his wings;" and a voice goes forth from one end of the earth to the other, "Awake, thou that

* Acts xvii. 30.

sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

And well may we expect that this voice should be heard. For observe the certain inference which we must draw from what the Evangelist reveals concerning the Christ, the Son of God. We learn from it the miserable and ruined state of man: so ruined and miserable, that the same power must redeem life, which had given life: the same divine person must create anew, who had at first created. He without whom nothing was made that was made, now comes to seek and to save that which was lost. Low, indeed, was the condition, which must needs be thus relieved and raised. Utter, surely, must be the ruin which could only be thus recovered. O! believe not, then, a deceived and deceitful world, which would tell you that man may be alienated from God, and yet be happy: unreconciled to his Maker and his Judge, and yet safe from danger. If he, who comes to save, is he who was in the beginning with God, and was God, no other argument is needed to prove the depth of ruin and of misery. We see it in the majesty of the Deliverer. In the greatness of the Saviour we read the greatness of man's necessity. In the vastness of the sacrifice, we learn to calculate the weight of our debt, the burthen of man's sin. And O! learn to measure from it, too, the extent of your obligation. Which will be greatest, the heinousness of guilt, or the extremity of loss, if we put this mercy from us, "count ourselves unworthy of eternal life," and "neglect so great salvation"?

Rather, may the gracious purpose which was designed, when "the Word was made flesh," be accomplished in us! "That we may know Him that is true," and "have fellowship with the Father through his Son Jesus Christ."

LECTURE X.

JOHN THE BAPTIST A WITNESS OF THE SON OF GOD, WHO WAS
REJECTED BY THOSE TO WHOM HE CAME.

JOHN i. 6-11.

(Matt. iii. 1-12; Luke iii. 1-17.)

6. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
7. "The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.
8. "He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.
9. "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

So great an event as the appearance of the Son of God, the incarnation of the Eternal Word, could not take place without announcement. Many prophecies had gone out respecting him; expectation had been raised, even beyond the land in which he should be born; and there was a general idea of One "that should come, and redeem Israel." And now that the proper season had arrived, according to the determinate counsel of God, an especial message was intrusted to John the son of Zacharias, that he might call the attention of the people to the "time of their visitation:" that he might "prepare the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight." *He came to bear witness of the light*, which was no longer to shine in darkness, but to be openly held up to view: sufficient and ready to *light every man that cometh into the world*.

Yet all are not enlightened. From the beginning it had proved so: men close their eyes against the light which they possess. The description is too just which follows.

10. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
11. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

The wisdom, the power, the goodness of the Creator *is manifest to the understandings of men*. "He left

not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain and fruitful seasons.”¹ Yet *the world knew him not*. “The world by wisdom,” by its own wisdom, by rightly exercising the faculties which God had given, had not learnt to know God their Creator.² The world at large was ignorant respecting Him. The Jewish people, to whom He had been clearly revealed, had better knowledge, had a purer faith; and when one came to them from the Father whom they professed to please and serve, it might be expected that they would eagerly follow him and hear him gladly. But no. *He came unto his own*, to his chosen nation, his peculiar people, *and his own received Him not*. The Jewish nation in general, as we know, did not receive Him as their Messiah: and even the people who had listened willingly to his discourses, and been relieved by the merciful exercise of his power, suffered Him to be led to execution, while not a single voice was raised in his favour. “The Son of man goeth, as was determined of Him!”

Let us however inquire on what ground they received Him not. Was it that He did not answer the predictions which had gone forth respecting him? We know that his lineage, his birth, his life, and his death, did fulfil the prophecies and correspond with the types concerning Him, in the most minute and remarkable particulars. Was it that He did not show such signs and wonders and mighty deeds, as were reasonably to be expected from the Messiah? It was acknowledged—“This man doeth many miracles;”—“No man can do the miracles which thou doest, except God be with him;”—“He saved others,” though Himself he did not save. Was it that his discourses and his doctrines were not in agreement with the character which he claimed? It was acknowledged, that “never man spake like this man:”—that “all men were astonished at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth:”—that “He

¹ Acts xiv. 17.

² 1 Cor. i. 21.

taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribes." And yet *they received Him not.*

The reason was not in Him, but in themselves. He came in a particular character. He came as a Saviour. He was announced as such by the angels. "Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." For this He was promised, predicted, sent; for this He took our nature, ministered, and died; that He might redeem a lost world, and deliver a race which sin had ruined. Now, to receive one who comes in this character, and purports to be such a Saviour, requires a certain state of mind in those who so receive him. To receive one who offers deliverance, implies a sense of danger, a sense of destitution and helplessness. To receive redemption through Christ Jesus, was to acknowledge a state of bondage and condemnation. To receive eternal life as the gift of God for his sake, was to cast themselves on his mercy, to abandon all personal claim, to renounce all procuring merit in themselves.

The Jewish people perceived this; against this their pride and their self-complacency revolted; and for this cause they *received Him not.* So St. Paul expressly shows, arguing to the Jews themselves in his Epistle to the Romans. They lost, he says, the blessing offered them; they did not *become the sons of God*, because they persisted in trusting to themselves, and refused to rely on Jesus as a Saviour. "They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." The fifth chapter of this Gospel (ver. 39) supplies an example, where we find our Lord reasoning with the Jews around Him. "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Here He addresses them as expecting eternal life, and thinking that they had it in their Scriptures; but not

* Rom. x. 3.

rightly interpreting the Scriptures, and therefore not having salvation, because they refused it through Him who is the author of it.

"Ye will not come to ME, that ye might have life." Ye will not come to the fountain, or ye might be cleansed. Ye withdraw yourselves from the physician, or ye might be healed. Ye will not seek the appointed door, or ye might enter in. Thus they maintained their self-dependence. They would not receive salvation "of grace." They did *not receive Him*, because of their proud, unhumiliated, self-confident, self-justifying heart. They would not humble themselves, that they might be exalted; but they would exalt themselves, and therefore they remained abased before God.

But more than this:—Jesus came as a Saviour not only from the guilt, but from the power of sin. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for He shall save his people from their sins." While He invited them to receive eternal life, He also required them to repent; for "the wages of sin is death;" to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance."

And here, again, they stumbled. A deliverer from foreign yoke, a deliverer from Herod or the Romans, they would have gladly followed. But a deliverer from sin had no inducement for them. That yoke they had not felt heavy. They did not grudge the tribute which they paid to Satan.

We meet with an example in the eighth chapter of this Gospel. There our Lord, discoursing in the presence of a large company, said to some who believed on Him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." This saying offended his hearers. They answer,—*"We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?"* They would not understand,—it did not suit them to understand,—that "*whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*"

They did not understand—nor care to understand—that He alone who could renew the heart in righteousness and true holiness, could make them “free indeed.”

To receive Him who required them to be, and who would make them, “poor in spirit,” and “pure in heart,” and lovers of righteousness, and merciful, and meek, was to lay aside their pride, and their sensuality, and their love of this present world, and their covetousness. And therefore *they received Him not*. And this was their condemnation: that light was come into the world; but they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. This was their condemnation, that when *He came unto his own, his own received Him not*. They rejected Him, because of their proud, unhumbled, unsubdued, self-confident, self-justifying heart. They depended on themselves that they were righteous, and “had need of nothing; and knew not that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”⁴

Let their error be our warning; their loss, our security. Let us learn to feel our own wretchedness, that we may gladly welcome deliverance; let us acknowledge our helplessness, that we may gladly lean on Him who is “mighty to save.” “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.”

LECTURE XI.

THE PRIVILEGES OF THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE WORD AS SENT OF GOD FOR THEIR SALVATION.

JOHN i. 12, 13.

12. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:
13. “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

It has been already stated, that when the Son of God came, He did not meet with acceptance. *He came*

⁴ See Rev. iii. 17.

unto his own, and his own received Him not. It was necessary, in the divine counsels, that the word of God should be first spoken to the Jews: but "they put it from them and counted themselves unworthy of eternal life." Yet not all. There were those who said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." These opened their eyes to the evidence which proved Him to be the Messiah. These neither opposed his doctrines, nor revolted from the redemption which He offered them. They closed with the mercy of God; they *believed in his name*; they *received Him*; and, together with Him, they received the privilege which He alone can give, the "adoption of children," and *became the sons of God*. Became, were made, the sons of God. Were they not so before?

In one sense, all mankind are the sons of God. So Adam is called by St. Luke¹ when he is tracing the line from which Joseph was descended. But the whole of the Jewish people were children of God in a higher sense. God sent a message to Pharaoh: (Ex. iv. 22:) "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born." Accordingly Moses addresses the people in Deuteronomy, (xiv. 1,) "Ye are the children of the Lord your God." Jesus recognises them as such, distinguishing them from the Gentiles. (Matt. xv. 26.) "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." And St. Paul speaks of the privilege enjoyed by his brethren; (Rom. ix. 4;) "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the promises."

Yet still we find, that they were capable of, and required, a further and more special adoption. There is a higher privilege, which they could only possess as disciples of Christ Jesus: a privilege which those Jews forfeited, who, when He came, received Him not; and to which those were raised, who did receive Him, and

¹ Luke iii. 38.

believed in His name. *To as many as received Him,*—to those who acknowledged the character in which He came, and accepted the redemption which He offered,—to those He assigned the blessings which He alone could give, and which in no other way they could enjoy. *To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.* God's children. "Ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And justly are they so entitled. It is not a vain and empty term. For, by the adoption given them, they have the provision, and the education, and the inheritance of children.

1. They have the provision of children. As the Father of all, God has provided for the whole race of man. He sends them rain and fruitful seasons, He causes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall, "on the just and on the unjust." But a very different provision is made for those who belong to the covenant which is in Christ Jesus. They have the assurance that their God shall supply all their wants; that all needful things shall be added to them; for their heavenly Father knoweth that they have need of all these things. "For even the hairs of their head are all numbered."^a The circumstances of their lives are so ordered, that all things work together for their good. If they are poor, it shall preserve them from temptation, and keep them humble; if they are rich, it is that they may be "rich in good works." If they are in adversity, it is that they may enjoy a peace which this world cannot give. If they are in prosperity, it is that they may take comfort from the sunshine of God's favour. Rich or poor, afflicted or prosperous, in health or in sickness, in life or in death, "they are the Lord's."

2. Together with the provision, they have also the education of children. If they are the sons of God, they are "led by the Spirit of God,"^a and prepared

^a See Matt. vi. 33. Phil. iv. 19.

^b See Rom. viii. 14.

by his grace for the glory which is to follow. He purifies them from the corruption of their natural descent, and renews them after his own image; He withdraws their hearts from things below, and raises them to things above: He uses exactly that discipline which their character most needs, whether gentle or severe: sometimes He chastens them, that they "may bring forth more fruit;" but still He "dealeth with them as sons;" yea, spareth them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."⁴

3. And in the end they have the inheritance of children. "If they are children, then are they heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."⁵ If they are children, they are the "blessed of the Father," whose "good pleasure it is to give them the kingdom," "the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world."⁶ We need not know, or desire to know, more of this inheritance, than that it is worthy of the purchase of the blood of Christ; worthy of the promise of God's everlasting covenant. It is an "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."⁷

Such are the privileges of those who are made the sons of God by faith that is in Christ Jesus. But who shall declare their generation? *They are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* It is not with their *spiritual* as with their *natural* birth: that comes of the will of the flesh, and of the will of man; but the spiritual being cannot be so handed down: God keeps it in His own power. The corruption of Adam descended in natural course to his posterity; but not so the grace of Adam, or of any since born his children: no man can produce it in another by his own means, or secure it for another by his will and desire. It is the gift of God. And though

⁴ See John xv. 2. Heb. xii. 7. Mal. iii. 17.

⁵ Rom. viii. 17.

⁶ Matt. xxv. 34. Luke xii. 32.

⁷ 1 Pet. i. 4.

we know it is bestowed according to just and equal laws, we are often foiled and baffled, if we attempt to trace their operation.

Still, we know that, which it is of chief consequence to know. Though this birth is a secret thing, and of a spiritual nature, it is discerned by outward signs. It belongs to those who receive Christ Jesus. *To as many as receive Him, to them gives He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.*

Inquire, then, how it is with yourselves. It was shown in the last lecture, why the Jews received Him not. When those reasons were pointed out, did your hearts reply, It is not so with us? On the contrary, we desire to be saved, "not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ Jesus." We have "come to Him that we might have life," knowing that without Him we were "dead in trespasses and sins." We do not complain that "if we are the sons of God," we must be "led by the Spirit of God." The promise is dear to us, that "if we continue in his word, we shall be made free,"—free from the dominion of sin. "Our rejoicing is this; the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity," we have received Christ Jesus for what He came to be: our PROPHET, to teach us the will of God; our PRIEST, to make propitiation for our sins; our LORD, to rule and direct our lives.

Blessed are they whose spirit bears witness with them that such is their case and state! And the more blessed, because "flesh and blood" has not put this new heart and right spirit within them, but the Father which is in heaven. If it was of flesh and blood,—if it was of the *will of man*, and not of *God*,—it might fail "through their manifold temptations." The corruption which they feel within, tells them it might fail, if it was of themselves. But this is their security; that *it is not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* And none shall pluck them out of his

hand. He that is the author, will be the finisher of their faith. "He that hath begun a good work in them, will perform it unto the end."

LECTURE XII.

THE WORD BECAME MAN. HIS GLORY, AS SEEN BY THE APOSTLES, AND WITNESSED IN THE WORLD.

JOHN i. 14.

14. "And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

ST. JOHN, in the preceding verses, had declared the DIVINITY of the Redeemer. "The Word was God." He now testifies with the same clearness, a truth which equally concerns us, his HUMANITY. *The Word was made flesh.* He who was God, took upon him the nature of man: the nature of frail mortal flesh. He did not cease to be what He was: He could not cease to be what He had been from eternity; but He became what He was not before, man as well as God.¹

Let us consider, first, Is this possible?

Why should it not be possible? There seems no reason why the nature which is clothed with flesh should only be such a nature as our own. God, we know, breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul. That soul might have partaken of his own nature instead of the nature which it has. The mode in which God and man became one, we cannot comprehend; but we need not go beyond ourselves, and the union of soul and body in our own natures, to meet with that which we shall never comprehend; and there is nothing contradictory in believing that, as the

¹ As defined by the fourth General Council.—"He was so made flesh, that he ceased not to be the Word; never changing that he was, but assuming that he was not."

living soul and body constitute one man, so God and man are one Christ. "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

Secondly, does this agree with what had been foretold, and with what the Jewish nation, possessing the oracles of God, had reason to expect?

God had declared to Adam that "the seed" or offspring "of the woman should bruise the serpent's head."² Jesus was the offspring of the woman Mary; and was now manifested to bruise the serpent's head, and to destroy the works of the devil.

Moses had assured the Israelites, that in due time "the Lord their God should raise up unto them of their brethren a prophet like unto himself."³ And now the Word was made flesh, and "born of a woman," among this people.

Isaiah had prophesied concerning a Saviour, in words which could only apply to one who came in fashion as a man, and yet who was in his nature more than man: whose generation was incomprehensible: whose appearance was frail and humble, yet whose power was divine.

The appearance, therefore, of Christ in the flesh did agree with the expectation raised by prophecy. And then we ask, thirdly, Was there a reason for it? Scripture explains the reason. Jesus came to save sinners, by dying the death of sinners. In the nature of God He could not die. He could not suffer except in that nature which had sinned. He could only bear the curse of the law in the nature which had incurred the curse by transgression of the law. Forasmuch then as those whom He came to redeem "are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their

² Gen. iii. 15.

³ Deut. viii. 15. See Acts xiii. 22.

⁴ Compare Isa. vii. and ix.

life-time subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on him the seed of Abraham.”⁵

Therefore, according to God’s power, and according to God’s determinate counsel, and for a reason which can be explained to us, “a body was prepared” for the Word: the Son of God “was made of the seed of David according to the flesh,”⁶ and dwelt among us in fashion as a man. “Without controversy, great is the mystery; God manifest in the flesh.”⁷ Great is the mystery: but how much greater is the mercy!

And now the Evangelist adds, *We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.* Though He showed Himself in the nature and weakness of man, He also showed Himself in the glory of Almighty God. That while we can approach and lean upon the one, we may trust in and commit ourselves to the other. St. John says, “*We beheld his glory.*” St. John was one of those who enjoyed this privilege in a special degree. He was of that chosen party which attended Jesus on Mount Tabor when “He was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.”⁸ The intent, surely, of that manifestation was to leave an impression upon the mind of the witnesses, which they should in time transmit to others. St. Peter used it for this purpose, saying, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.”⁹

Such is the clear assurance left to us from those

⁵ Heb. ii. 14—16.

⁶ Heb. x. 5.

⁷ Rom. i. 3.

⁸ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

⁹ Matt. xvii. 1, 2.

¹ 2 Pet. i. 18—19.

who spoke what they knew, and testified* what they had seen. It has been handed down to us in uninterrupted order by successive generations of Christians. The apostles beheld it. To the different assemblies among which they went, "preaching the word," they related what their "eyes had seen, and their hands had handled, of the Word of life."² And what was so witnessed and confirmed, the first companies of Christians received as true; and believed in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God: so that Peter could affirm of them, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."³ These, again, conveyed the word of truth to the generation that came after; the leaven was gradually diffused; the seed became a great tree, with its branches spread on every side, and "its leaves for the healing of the nations." But as the tree which may have stood for centuries, and which no man living has ever known except as a widely spreading and an ancient tree, was once a seed, and would never have existed at all if that seed had not been dropped into the ground: so with our Christian faith. The believers have multiplied; ages have followed ages; nation after nation has been added to the church; and the time seems far back since that church first began to be. Still there was a first seed;—and that seed was planted, when *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth*, and the apostles beheld his glory.

In one way, that glory has been evidently beheld in every age that has since passed. For, in every age that has since passed, multitudes have been brought, through the preaching of the word, "from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God:" multitudes have given up their sinful practices and their worldly desires, and have laid them at the foot of the cross, and have "received the gift of the Holy Ghost," so as

* 1 John i. 1.

³ 1 Pet. i. 8.

to become "a peculiar people," living to the glory of God, and adorning the doctrine of the Saviour. Men "see their good works," see "their light shining;" and they behold in this a testimony, a glorious evidence of the Gospel. A testimony was given which it was impossible to resist, when, as Saul was on his way to Damascus, a light shone suddenly from heaven "above the brightness of the sun," and struck the persecutor with blindness. But a few days after was Saul himself a less convincing spectacle, when praying for direction to him whom he had so lately persecuted, and preaching the doctrine which before he destroyed? "The voice which came out of the cloud was astonishing, when it said, "This is my beloved Son, hear Him." But the dying voice of the Christian Stephen was equally convincing, when, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, he knelt down and prayed, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

These, however, are extraordinary cases. We need not go so far back, we need not appeal to extraordinary interpositions of divine power, to see proofs of the glory of Christ, or to be convinced by the evidence which it supplies. Every member of the fold of Christ bears about him testimony to his Shepherd's faithfulness, and truth, and power. I know not what evidence can be stronger. When we see an individual of the Jewish nation, we see an undeniable proof of the truth of the Bible history, and of the prophecies it contains. So, when we behold a true and consistent Christian, we possess the same evidence of all that the Gospel says of the mercy of God, the divinity of Christ, and the power of the Spirit. What can be a greater miracle, than one who has his dealings here on earth, and his conversation in heaven: who is dead to the things with which he is daily and hourly conversant, and whose "life is hid with Christ in God?" Surely

⁴ See Acts ix. 3—22.

⁵ Acts vii. 59, 60.

this is not natural. Especially when we remember the temptations of that world to which he is crucified, and the corruption of that heart which he is subduing, and the rebellious lusts of the flesh which he habitually mortifies.

We have reason to be thankful that these evidences of the glory of Christ have never failed. We may see them in those around us ; nay, we may possess them in ourselves : and let none be satisfied unless he does possess this inward testimony. Every one possesses it, who, through faith in the Son of God, is renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, and enabled to escape the corruption which is in the world. And God has put this proof within the power of every one : "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself ;" has it in the consciousness of his heart, and the obedience of his life. This is a sure record ; and this is the true faith, and eternal life.

I conclude with a single reflection : *The word was made flesh.* For what purpose ? "For us men, and for our salvation." He descended to our nature, that He might exalt us to his. He was made flesh, that we might be raised above the flesh, and become "partakers of the divine nature." He became the Son of man, that we might become the sons of God. But to what end, if we still remain carnal, earthly, sensual ? Know ye not that the unrighteous, the unholy, the ungodly, "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" ? If it could be so, if an unsanctified, unrenewed nature could be admitted to the presence of God and the glory of his power, what need was there that the Word should be made flesh and dwell amongst us ?

Therefore "cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and -spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." "Mortify your members which are upon the earth : " and "glorify God in your body and in your

spirit, which are God's." For "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;" live for ever.

LECTURE XIII.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE SON OF GOD TO SUPPLY ALL THE
WANTS OF HIS DISCIPLES.

JOHN i. 15, 16.

15. "John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me.
16. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

THE purpose of John the Baptist's mission was to prepare the way for him of whom he spake. He of whom he spake was come, and was now ready to enter upon his ministry. John therefore must be superseded, and retire before the presence of Jesus, of whom he was the forerunner: just as the morning star, which shines so brightly until dawn, disappears when the sun rises in the heavens.

And now the Evangelist proceeds to describe the benefits of his light; his blessed influence upon the world. His divine nature, his eternal existence, his omnipotence, had been before declared. "In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But this might be, and yet no advantage be derived to man. The mine may be rich; full of gold or precious stones: but what is this, unless the mine is open to us, and we have access to the treasure? To the treasure which is laid up in Christ, all who believe in Him have access. The apostles had already proved this; and St. John

speaks his own experience, when he writes, *Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.*¹

It was *from his fulness* that these unlearned and ignorant men received "a mouth and wisdom," which all their "adversaries had not been able to resist."² He supplied their answer to the high priest and elders. It was not in their own strength, which had been proved weakness, but in the might of their Master, that they said (Acts iv. 19), "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

It was *from his fulness* that they had been enabled to perform works exceeding the power of man: as Peter declared (Acts iii. 16), after the healing of the cripple, "His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong: yea, the faith which is by Him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

It was from the supply *of his fulness* that Paul could dare to say, (1 Cor. i. 4, 5,) "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ: that in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge."

Still, if this abundant grace had been poured out upon the apostles only, those who believe in Christ "through their word" would read of it with little interest. It would not concern them. But when St. John says that *of his fulness have all we received*, he speaks in the name of all successive believers. He means that Christ is the fountain from which all may supply their need. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk

¹ *Χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος*. A double measure of grace; grace increasing by successive degrees.

² Luke xxi. 15.

without money and without price." "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." This is expressed in many ways in Scripture. Sometimes Christ is the stem, which furnishes the sap of life to all his branches. Sometimes He is the stream, which pours forth its perpetual supply.⁸ Sometimes He is the treasury, in which "it has pleased God that all fulness should dwell:" "in whom are laid up all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:"⁴ and these He dispenses by his Spirit, "dividing to every man severally as He will." Thus he recovers them from their lost estate, and repairs the ruins of the fall.

Observe the richness of the treasure, observe the copiousness of the stream. Do we want pardon? There are none who do not need it: but even where it is most urgently needed, of *his fulness* it may be received. He has made a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for the sins of all that believe. Even the malefactor upon the cross was permitted to find that "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

Do we require knowledge? He is "the light of the world." He has revealed to us all that is most valuable to learn. He has given us an acquaintance with God, an acquaintance with ourselves; He has told us the nature of this world and the nature of the world to come: He has told us on whom God will have mercy, and on whom He will not have mercy: He has abundantly fulfilled the expectation which had gone forth concerning Him; "when Messiah cometh, which is called Christ, he will tell us all things."⁵

Or do we need a power which we have not in ourselves, to subdue our natural sinfulness, to keep down indwelling sin, and to renew the heart after the image of God? He is the source of all spiritual victory: and God would have us trust to the fulness of his strength, that we may receive *grace for grace*, grace in abundant

⁸ John xv. 4; vii. 37.

⁴ Col. i. 19; ii. 3.

⁵ John iv. 25.

and increasing measure. Thus living upon Him in perpetual dependence, the disciples maintain a continued intercourse with their Master, the soldiers with their Captain, the servants with their Lord.

Here then must be sought whatever is wanted of grace and spiritual knowledge. Independently of Christ Jesus we have nothing : as He Himself declares, "Without me ye can do nothing." With Him we have everything. As it is written again, "He that abideth in me, the same bringeth forth much fruit : " and as Paul has left on record, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Let no one boast : for "what hath he which he hath not received ?" "Our sufficiency is of Christ." Let no one despair : for who has ever come to Him in penitence and faith, and been cast out, or found his truth to fail ?

LECTURE XIV.

THE OLD AND NEW COVENANT CONTRASTED. THE USE
OF THE LAW.

JOHN i. 17.

17. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

A COMPARISON is here drawn between the first and second dispensation. And the difference is strongly marked by the circumstances attending them.

The law was given by Moses. Moses was a highly favoured servant of God, selected to communicate his will to the chosen nation. Yet he was a man ; one of the fallen race of Adam. *But grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* God, having a design of mercy, sent forth his Son—his well-beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased : and He, "the mighty Lord," was proclaimed as "the Prince of peace."

Again, when Moses was summoned to receive the declaration of God's purposes, Mount Sinai burned with fire; blackness, and darkness, and tempest surrounded it, and there was heard "the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." But the *grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ*, was characterised by its different announcement. All was condescension in God, and comfort to mankind. "Fear not; I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will towards men."

Still it was an advantage which we must not undervalue, that *the law was given by Moses* to the Israelites. It was an "advantage, great every way, that unto them were committed the oracles of God." God did not pass them by: or give them up, like other nations, "to a reprobate mind," ignorant of Him and of his will. They were taught his "statutes and his judgments, which if a man do, he shall continue in them." And they were many, more than we pretend to number, who were thus led to "do justice, and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God," and to direct their lives "according to the commandments and ordinances of the law."

What, however, would be the effect of this law of God, if we had no other revelation of his will? What, but to condemn all mankind? As the apostle says, to "conclude all under sin," that "every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." This law, whether given to the Israelites by Moses, or repeated by Jesus in his discourses, may all be summed up, as He has Himself summed it up, under these two heads: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself." And

¹ Heb. xii. 18—21.

who can hold up his hand and affirm, I am guiltless of any transgression against these laws ?

If then the terms of the law are such, as to condemn those who transgress it—and such must be the terms of every law—“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them :”—it is clear that “by the law is the knowledge of sin :” that “by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified :” and we have eternal reason to be thankful, that *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*. The apostle has taught us how to feel and reason : saying, “The strength of sin is the law : but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is right to be often reflecting upon this : to call to mind, how many things we have done which we ought not to have done : how many things we have left undone that we ought to have done : and that our only comfort must be, “By grace are ye saved ;” “by Jesus Christ all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Thus the law is used by the Spirit to “convince of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment ;” becomes “a school-master,” a mighty teacher, “to bring us unto Christ :” to awe the transgressor into a thankful acceptance of his mercy. In earthly cases, we often find the criminal hardened in his denial of guilt, confident of escape, sullen, obstinate : but when an unexpected witness appears against him, and his guilt is clearly shown, his spirit fails, his conscience shrinks, and the terror of death subdues, if it does not soften him. The effect of the law upon our hearts should be of a like nature : should be to soften them, now, in time, that we may not at last fall into the hands of an unpropitiated God. It seems to say, Why contend and dispute against God ? You cannot change him who is unchangeable : you cannot alter his will, which is fixed from everlasting *upon the pillars of eternal right* : but you may reject

his counsel against yourself, (it is but too possible,) you may despise his mercy, and then, too late, experience his anger. Whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, you must submit to die, and stand before God, to be judged by that law which he has ordained. "Woe to him that striveth with his Maker!" Repent, and return unto the Lord : there are still the means of peace and reconciliation : *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ* : cast upon Him your burthen, and find rest unto your soul.

Therefore, as the demand of the law is perfect obedience, so the offer of Christ is perfect forgiveness. Perfect obedience no man has paid or can pay. Perfect forgiveness every one may enjoy who seeks to be accepted through the righteousness which is of God by faith. The two covenants have this great distinction one is command, the other is mercy ; mercy which assures us, that, though man had transgressed the covenant of command, God had still in store a covenant of grace ; that though man had fallen far short of the obedience which God required, God has not altogether cast off his unworthy servants. "Herein was love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and, while we were yet sinners, has reconciled us to himself by the death of his Son."

But here a question meets us, which occurred to St. Paul, when arguing in this same strain. "Wherefore then serveth the law?" Are we at liberty to disparage it, to neglect it? God forbid. Think not, said our Lord himself, foreseeing what might be alleged, "think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets ; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

And there are three uses which the law serves, all which tend to establish the Christian character ; there are three considerations which it suggests to the mind, all which we must attentively cherish.

^a Gal. iii. 19.

We read the commandments of the law, as Moses gave them to the Israelites. The Lord Jesus enforced them, explained them, extended them; showed that the spirit of them, and not the letter only, must be fulfilled. The apostles still further point out their bearing upon the heart and life.

The first thought should be, This is God's will respecting me. My Saviour kept all these laws perfectly. Not that I might not keep them, but that He might leave me an example as well as an injunction to follow his steps, and walk as He walked. These, then, are to be my rule; and by these I must exercise myself, that I may "keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man."

The second thought is of another nature. These are the commands of God. This law is his law—my Maker's law. What could be my hope, if He were to reward me according as I had kept it from my youth up?—if that were to be my "righteousness, that I had continued in all the things that are written in the law to do them?" Thanks be to Him, who has redeemed me from the curse of the law; whom God has made to me "wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption."

And, lastly, consider within yourselves, Do I keep these commandments? Do I allow myself in the wilful neglect of any of them? Is it my aim, my desire, my prayer, to love the Lord my God with all my heart, and my neighbour as myself?—to bring every thought, word, and wish, into captivity to the obedience of Christ? Do I direct my life by the law, and try myself, and judge myself, by the law, though I trust not to be "under the law before God?"

This use of the law remains under the Gospel; and those who most constantly use it for these purposes, are those who understand the Gospel best. Whatever, then, your state is, there is use in the law. If you *are yet unreconciled* to God, the law condemns you.

“Agree with thine adversary quickly.” Apply yourself unto Christ, who bore your sins in his own body, that you may find rest unto your soul.

If you have already sought shelter under his cross, still keep your eye upon the law. Look to it, that you may better measure that which is beyond all measure, the goodness of Him who has blotted out the record of your transgressions. Look to it also as the rule by which you are to be guided; the standard by which you are to judge yourself now, and hereafter to be judged: see how far, how very far, you come short of that standard, and be humble.

LECTURE XV.

WHATEVER KNOWLEDGE WE HAVE OF GOD, IS DERIVED TO US
THROUGH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST : WHO HAS DECLARED HIS
JUSTICE AND HIS MERCY.

JOHN i. 18.

18. “No man hath seen¹ God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

THIS sentence reminds us of a most important truth. We know nothing of God, nothing which we can depend upon, or trust to, except what He has Himself revealed. *No man hath seen God at any time.* As it is justly asked in the book of Job, “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?”²

Yet we often meet with those who argue respecting God and his counsels, as if they *had* seen Him, and been admitted to the “secret things which belong to

¹ *Seen*—perceived, discovered, and fully understood, either as to his essence or his attributes. *Declared*—revealed, disclosed.

² Job xi. 7.

Him." And still more often we find men so acting, so living in the world, as if they knew that He was regardless of either right or wrong, and would make no difference between those who serve Him and those who serve Him not.

Now it would be a grievous calamity if there were no help for this ignorance: if, because no man hath seen God, therefore no man, however desirous and piously sincere, could become acquainted with his character and will. His we are, and from his hand nothing can deliver us. We must be sensible of the power which He has over us, whether for good or evil, happiness or misery, if we either turn to the constitution of the body or the soul. Can it, then, be a matter of indifference, a light matter, whether we are the objects of his anger, or his favour? whether He is reconciled to us, and we are at peace with Him?

Here, then, is the blessing which we receive from that vast event which St. John has been announcing, "God manifest in the flesh:" God revealing Himself to us "by his Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.* Or, as the same truth is expressed in St. Luke, (x. 22,) "No man knoweth who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him."

The Jewish Scriptures certainly furnish much knowledge of God; all the knowledge which could be given by description. He is represented as "God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible." He is represented as "the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him to a thousand generations."³ "All his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He."⁴ The Psalms of David abound with great and lofty thoughts concerning the majesty and goodness

³ Deut. vii. 9.

⁴ Deut. xxxii. 4.

of God. And the prophets fill up the outline, and describe "the High and Holy One, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, yet humbleth Himself to behold the things that are upon the earth," and to "look on him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word."⁵

St. John, however, was no stranger to this. He was brought up in the knowledge of it, as belonging to the Jewish nation; a nation distinguished from the rest of the world, because they had this knowledge; because they did not "change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man," or suppose that the world was either self-created or had no beginning.

And yet St. John clearly implies in this sentence that the incarnation of *the only begotten Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, has declared* God to us, as He could not otherwise be declared; has given us an acquaintance with Him which we could not otherwise have enjoyed.

And it is easy to perceive this. Let us trace it in regard to the two attributes with which we are most concerned, his JUSTICE and his MERCY.

1. We are told, plainly told in Scripture, that God "cannot look upon evil;" that "He will by no means clear the guilty." "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." But men invent a thousand reasons, why they should not believe this. *Therefore the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared it.* He declared it, when He was lifted up on the cross to "bear the sins of many:" to "bear our sins in his own body:" to "give his life a ransom:" to "die unto sin:" to show that between sin and misery, as the consequence of sin, there is an inseparable connexion, and that "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;" for "the wages of sin is death."

A king, (let us suppose,) an earthly sovereign, has

⁵ Isaiah lxvi. 2.

proclaimed to his subjects, that every wilful offender against his law shall die. What irresistible force would be added to his proclamation, if, rather than leave the law unsatisfied, he did not spare his son, his only son ! Here, then, the incarnation of the *only begotten Son of God* has declared to us the JUSTICE of the Father with a plainness not to be misunderstood.

2. But God is also revealed to us as "long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." And surely the Gospel of Christ Jesus has declared this in characters which shine as a sunbeam. There his MERCY is beheld in active exercise : "For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." As the apostle writes, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." *The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has declared* the Father to us, as planning the wonderful scheme of our redemption ; as testifying his goodness by that "mystery of godliness," which "the angels desire to look into:" as sending out his ambassadors to a rebellious world, that the world may be converted to God : "as having prepared for them that love Him" glory which cannot be expressed, and "such good things as pass man's understanding."

Behold, then, the character in which God is revealed to you : He, whom *no man hath seen at any time*, "though He is not far from any of us ;" He with whom you have to do. However boldly men may contend and cavil, you cannot know Him, except as He has revealed Himself. Behold, as St. Paul says, looking to this very thing, "behold the goodness and severity of God : on them which fell, severity ; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness : otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."*

* Rom. xi. 22.

“Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.” Behold, ye that are penitent and poor in spirit, and rejoice : “yea, again I say unto you, rejoice.”

LECTURE XVI.

JOHN DESCRIBES JESUS AS THE LAMB OF GOD.

JOHN i. 29.

29. “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

JESUS had been living in retirement while the Baptist was fulfilling his public ministry. Therefore John *knew Him not* ; yet he knew the purpose for which He came. The Spirit had revealed this to him, and therefore he is able to bear record to him as *the Son of God*, whose ministry was to set aside his own, who was to complete, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, that baptism of repentance which he had himself been hitherto exercising. He points Him out to his disciples in terms which at once explain a whole volume of type and prophecy. *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

We had been told before, “The Word was made flesh.” The reason, the purpose of this incarnation is now disclosed. It is all contained in the description, *The Lamb of God*. He came to be the propitiation for sin. He came to be that, which He alone could be, an atonement to the holiness of God, for the guilt incurred by man.

Adam had transgressed the law which he was bound to obey, and involved the whole race of his posterity in corruption. And how could man be pardoned, and the holiness of God’s government be maintained ? “As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,” who could be the one, by whose “obedience many might be made righteous ?” None of the sons

of men could offer an atonement. They needed atonement; for they were themselves corrupt; they had nothing to pay: "No man can redeem his brother, or make agreement unto God for him." But the Son of God, the eternal, uncreated Word, consented to stand in the stead of that guilty race. "In the volume of the book it is written of him, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."¹ Being "without spot of sin," his innocence might be received as a free offering; and, taking man's nature upon him, he could suffer man's penalty.

This was determined from the beginning. Jesus is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."² And being so determined, it was foreshown in various ways. From the earliest times, the patriarchs are represented as offering sacrifice to God. As mankind were dispersed, they carried the custom with them, though its purpose was lost and forgotten. But the whole is contained in the law given by Moses to the Israelites. It could not be mistaken, when the priest laid his hands upon the head of the creature intended for an offering, and made confession of sin over the head of the sacrifice; thus prefiguring what was afterwards to be more fully explained, how the Lord had laid on one the iniquity of all.³

By the ordinances of the law, various animals were used in sacrifice; but none so constantly as the lamb. One was offered up in the temple every morning, and another every evening; and on the sabbath, two.⁴ But it was the rite of the passover which most evidently and remarkably typified that full and perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of all men, which was consummated upon the cross. The lamb slain as the passover was to be without blemish.⁵ So was Jesus without spot of sin, neither was guilt found in his mouth.⁶ The lamb was to be "of the first year;" so

¹ Ps. xl. 6. Heb. x. 4, &c.

² Rev. xiii. 8.

³ Lev. xvi. 21.

⁴ Isa. liii.

⁵ Num. xxviii. 3—10.

⁶ Exod. xii. 3, &c.

⁷ See 1 Pet. i. 19.

Christ was cut off in the prime of his days, and slain by such a death, that, as was ordered in the killing of the passover, "not a bone of Him was broken." The lamb was to be slain by the "whole assembly of the congregation of Israel." So it was on the principal festival of the year that "counsel was taken against Jesus, to put Him to death:" and the whole people made it their own act, by exclaiming, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" "His blood be on us and on our children!" The lamb, too, was slain in the evening. And so it was in the evening, "about the ninth hour," when Jesus, "knowing that all things were now accomplished" which He had undertaken for our salvation, declared,—*"It is finished;"* "and bowed his head and gave up the ghost." And as in the manner of the sacrifice all was similar, so was the effect the same. The blood of the lamb sprinkled on the doorposts of the houses preserved the people of Israel from the messenger of destruction. And so the blood of Christ, sprinkled, as it were, upon our hearts, is designed to exempt the sinner from the stroke of divine justice, and save him from "the bitter pains of eternal death." Thus was atonement made to the justice of God: who, in mercy to man's ruined and helpless state, has covenanted to receive the blood of one instead of the blood of many, and to be reconciled to the penitent offender for the sake of his dear Son.

Here then is the sense in which we behold Jesus as *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*—taketh away all that sin which is laid upon him by the faith of the penitent offender. The words of the Baptist show that he possessed the key of that mysterious worship which God had established, and was empowered to disclose its meaning, hitherto concealed. He points to Jesus, and exclaims, *Behold the Lamb of God.* And behold, in Him, the person so long prefigured by the sacrifices of the law. Behold the one righteous, designed in the counsels of God as

a substitute for many sinners. Behold the true Paschal Lamb, who is offered for us, to take away the sin of the world : who by his death shall destroy death, and by his rising to life again shall restore to us everlasting life. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

The application of these words of the Baptist is simple and clear. *Behold the Lamb of God.* Let wilful offenders against the divine command behold the testimony which God has borne to the heinousness of sin, in the fact established by the law of Moses, that "without shedding of blood is no remission."

But let the humble and contrite behold, in *the Lamb of God*, an evident proof of the divine mercy. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things?" "pertaining to life and godliness?"

LECTURE XVII.

JESUS CHRIST THE AUTHOR OF ETERNAL LIFE TO ALL WHO
BELIEVE IN HIM.

JOHN iii. 36.

36. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

JOHN speaks here, as inspired with an ample knowledge of the blessings conveyed by "the covenant of promise," *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.* Who can sufficiently comprehend what is intended in that phrase? The presence of God: and in his

^a Rom. v. 10.

^b Rom. viii. 32.

“presence is fulness of joy :” the possession of a nature without sin and without sorrow : the deliverance from fear or danger : the exemption from all decay or change for ever.

This is the consummation. But the sentence both here and elsewhere speaks of something in possession. He that believeth *hath* everlasting life. He has now the beginning, the earnest of it. He has it, in reconciliation, acceptance, adoption with God. He has it, in union with Christ. He has it, in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He has it, in a heart raised beyond this present world, and fixed on things above. He has it, in “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” All these blessings are immediate : a new life given now, connected with life everlasting : a life unknown to those who do not belong to the same covenant : a secret hidden life which is animating the man within, whilst outwardly he is partaking of the cares and duties of the world below.

Is this indeed a “treasure,” a pearl of great price ? John here tells us to whom it belongs, and by what means it is obtained. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. For the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.* They, then, enjoy the blessing, who believe that God hath sent his Son, that He may give eternal life to as many as receive Him : to all who receive the offer which is made in plain and simple terms, “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die : but I will raise him up at the last day.” “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

They who hear this offer with a hearing ear, reflect within themselves how far it may suit their case, how far it may supply their need. They perceive its fitness. For they are conscious of the distance which separates them from God : that though they live, and move, and have their being in Him, their hearts are naturally strangers to the holiness which He requires. They

gladly accept the offer, and take the promise home, as simply as it is made. It is offered to the believers, and they believe. It is held out to as many as receive Christ Jesus, and they receive him : they become one with him, and He with them : they dwell in Him and he in them. In all their spiritual growth, He strengthens and cherishes them, as the tree its branches. In their fears and dangers, He is their refuge, as the ark was a refuge to Noah. In their difficulties and labours He directs them, as the head directs the members of the body. And though their life is sometimes feeble and ready to fail, and they are subject to many alternations of health and weakness ; still it survives ; they have life, they have everlasting life, as long as their faith keeps them united to the Saviour *whom God hath sent, who speaketh the words of God. They have received his testimony*, though multitudes refuse it : they have *set to their seal that God is true*, and that "faithful is he who hath promised."

It is not so with those who despise the gift of God, and set at nought his offers. Their state is described here in words few and brief, but amply comprehensive. *He that believeth not the Son shall not see life : but the wrath of God abideth on him.* The ark has floated near them, but they have refused to enter it for safety ; therefore the flood must come, and sweep them all away. They have been nigh to the "city of refuge," and have refused to take shelter within its gates ; therefore *the wrath of God abideth on them.*

LECTURE XVIII.

THE FAITH OF THE SAMARITANS.

JOHN iv. 39—42.

39. "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.
 40. "So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.
 41. "And many more believed because of his own word;
 42. "And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

ALL Scripture is profitable for instruction. And this account of the inhabitants of Sychar may serve a very important purpose. It furnishes a striking example of the two sorts of faith which may exist in the mind, and which it is highly needful to distinguish.

THE FIRST is a belief grounded on the report of others. *Many believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.*

THE SECOND sort of faith goes further, and depends on personal experience and conviction. *Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*

It will be useful to examine this.

The faith of the Samaritans, in the first instance, when they *went out from the city and came unto Jesus*, had its foundation in the report which the woman made. She had assured them that Jesus had proved Himself to be acquainted with all the acts of her life. It could only be accounted for in one way. *Is not this the Christ?* Can this man, to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid, be any other than He whom we were looking for, who was to come into

the world? They concluded that it must be so, *and believed at her saying.*

This is the foundation of all faith in Christ. It is far from being all that is meant by "receiving Him and believing in his name:" but it is the needful basis on which all future faith may stand. We believe that a Saviour of the world had been promised; had been foretold by prophets; had been prefigured by types; had been expected by devout men; and at last appeared in man's nature about eighteen hundred years ago. We believe that He did many miracles; healed the sick, restored the dead; taught an excellent doctrine, exhorted sinners to repent; suffered death upon the cross, but rose again from the tomb, and ascended to the place which He had left in the bosom of the Father. This we believe—on the report of others—on the report of those who lived at that time, and witnessed these things. They delivered these facts to their children and contemporaries; these handed them down to the generation that came after; and in this way they have always been believed by Christians, who could not possibly know the facts in any other manner, unless *the Christ* were to appear in every age. It was thus with the Samaritans. They believed first on the woman's report. They could not have known, for themselves, whether Jesus had declared to her the secret actions of her life. But she assured them so, and they believed her.

Now this is the sort of faith in which the inhabitants of a Christian country grow up. They know that they have been baptized in the name of Jesus. They know the principal circumstances of his life. They know that he suffered death upon the cross; and they have a vague idea that his death was a great benefit to mankind.

Such is the belief of children; and the belief of many who are no longer children goes no farther. The belief which they have is good, though not sufficient. *They must believe that "the Word was made*

flesh, and dwelt among us ;" that He "died for our sins, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." And these things they can only believe on the testimony of those who witnessed them. If the people here had not attended to their countrywoman, saying, *Come, and see a man, who told me all things that ever I did*, they would never have *heard Him for themselves* at all.

But still we must bear in mind that this is only the beginning of that faith, by which, "being justified, we have peace with God." A person may believe all this, and feel no doubt of its truth :¹ and yet may be no way influenced by it in his heart and life. It is the same with belief in the existence of God. How few are found ready to deny that "there is one God !" And yet how few live as if they believed it, and either love, or fear, or reverence, or obey Him ? Nothing is more easy, and nothing more common, than to believe that Jesus was sent from God ; that He was "approved as such by signs and wonders and mighty deeds," that He most unjustly suffered a cruel death :—and yet to have none of that faith by which men are justified before God ; and of which Jesus so frequently declared, "Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace." It is one thing to know a man to be an excellent physician ; it is another thing to apply to him, and follow his counsel. So it is one thing to believe in the history of Jesus, as related in the Bible : and another thing to rely on him as "the Christ, the Saviour of the world," by whom alone we obtain health or salvation.

But to this real and justifying faith the Samaritans proceeded, being led on to it by their own inquiry and experience. *Now we believe, not for thy saying ; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.* On the testimony which the woman gave, they had *besought Him that He would tarry with them.* *And He abode there two days.*

¹ See 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

² See James ii. 19.

And during those two days, though his discourses are not preserved, we may feel sure what their subject was. He would tell them, that, "except they repent, they must all perish." But that they need not perish. "For God had sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but hath everlasting life." These things He was often repeating, and those to whom He addressed them, cavilled at his words: or "went back, and walked no more with Him." But here was more of that "honest and good heart," which the Lord opens, so that it "understands the things that are spoken." So that *many believed because of his word*: and said, *We have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*

And all must be able to affirm the same, who have any Scriptural right to peace or hope as being "reconciled to God" "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." They must have understood the description of Christ as suited to themselves, and the promises of Christ as offered to themselves. In infancy they had been enrolled within his covenant: in their youth they had named the name of Christ, and believed on their parent's word, or their country's creed. But now they have sought further, and learnt more, and themselves discovered that *this is indeed the Christ*. They can assume the language of the Apostle, "I know in whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him unto the great day."

Let none rest, till they can say this in their own persons, as the feeling of their own hearts. "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto them into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour."

LECTURE XIX.

FAITH IN CHRIST DECLARED TO BE THE WORK REQUIRED
BY GOD.

JOHN vi. 29.

29. "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."

A PLAIN and obvious reply, suited to the inquirers of every age. You desire to *do the works of God*;—to fulfil that which he expects of you. This is as it should be, that the creature should perform the work assigned him by his Creator. Nor is that work doubtful. He hath sent his message; He has commissioned his own Son to deliver it; and He requires you to believe Him.

"This is his commandment, that ye should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ." *This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.*

As this is a sentence not belonging to the Jews alone, but to all whom the sound of the gospel reaches, it is right to stop awhile and inquire, whether we in this respect are working the works of God. Do we *believe on Him whom He hath sent*?

He came to tell us, that in ourselves, and our natural condition, we are lost: lost through that sin which Adam brought upon the world, and of which he bequeathed to his posterity both the guilt and the penalty. "For in Adam all die." "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners."

He came to tell us, that by the blood which He shed upon the cross, the ransom which He paid there, the sacrifice He then offered,—this sin has been atoned for, this guilt may be taken away, and the sinner restored to the favour of his God. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners,

so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”¹

He came to tell us, that this atonement is imparted, this benefit made over to those who receive its Author for what He was sent to be : receive Him in the affection and devotion of their hearts as the Redeemer by whom their souls are ransomed, are made acceptable to God, and endowed with everlasting life. As was declared in the last chapter, (v. 24,) “ He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation ; but is passed from death unto life.”

He came to tell us, that “ every man who hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure ;” is “ renewed in the spirit of his mind ;” “ mortifies his members which are upon the earth ;” and gives all diligence that he may not be idle, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, but may “ be fruitful in every good work, unto all well-pleasing, being filled with the fruits of the Spirit, which are to the glory and praise of God.”

This He reveals : to the truth of this revelation God the Father hath set his seal : and to believe this, is the work which He would have us to do.

To the question, then, which an awakened mind is anxiously led to ask, How shall I be reconciled to God, and live more conformably to his will ?—to this question it would not be a proper reply to say, in the first place, “ Do justice, love mercy ;” “ give alms of thy goods ;” “ keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile.” These, indeed, are *the works of God*, the works which He requires : but the first thing that He requires is, that we *believe on Him whom He hath sent* : and then go forth in the spirit of that faith, and in obedience to his word, to walk before Him in righteousness and holiness. It is only through that faith that God will receive our works :

¹ Rom. v. 19 ; 1 Cor. xv. 22.

only through that faith that we can so perform them that they shall be acceptable to Him.* We must first be grafted upon the right stem, and become branches of the true vine, before we can bring forth fruit pleasing to God through his Spirit working in us.

To this, then, look constantly and habitually, as to the foundation. See that it is securely laid. Have you a just sense of your own exceeding misery, as shown in the estrangement of the natural heart from God ; and of God's exceeding mercy, as shown in the incarnation of his Son ? To increase this sense, of helplessness on the one side, and of mercy on the other, is the way to "abound in the works of the Lord." No principle of holiness is so strong, as that arising from the atonement which He made for sin : no principle of charity so cogent, as "the love of Christ constraining us" to imitate his wonderful example, and to comply with the declarations of his will. "Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead ; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them."^s

LECTURE XX.

JESUS DECLARES UNTO THE JEWS THE CONSEQUENCES OF REJECTING HIM.

JOHN viii. 24.

24. "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins : for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."

HERE was an awful consideration, little understood. Jesus was looking forward to that time, not now far

* Art. xiii. "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ."

^s 2 Cor. v. 14.

distant, when He should ascend again to the glory which He had with the Father "before the world was:" to that presence where is "fulness of joy:" to that place where is "pleasure for evermore." And there are those who shall be with Him there. He has assured us, that where He is, there also shall his servant be: and that to him that overcometh, He will grant to sit with Him on his throne. But to these who now opposed and rejected Him, He openly declares, "Ye shall seek me, but ye shall not find me." *Whither I go, ye cannot come.*

For two plain reasons. They had refused to seek admission in the way that God proposed. And they were in their characters unfit for the kingdom of heaven.

1. They had rejected the offer made them. Jesus had expressly said, "Whoso believeth on me, I will raise him up at the last day." But they denied the authority of his words, set aside the testimony of his miracles, treated Him with disdain and scorn, instead of respectful inquiry, and now went about to kill Him. Therefore He said, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." And if they would not come unto Him, who is the "Author of eternal life," where was their hope? They had closed the door against themselves.

To them, and to all, there is but one mode of access to the place where the Lord Jesus is, and will for ever be. He is "the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Him."

2. Such is the Father's will. But there is a reason for it. They who are to dwell in heaven, must be prepared for heaven. Their evil nature must be renewed and purified. They must "put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and must put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."¹ "Ex-

¹ Eph. iv. 22.

cept a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

But all this was utterly distasteful to the scribes and Pharisees, and other opposers of our Lord. That He required holiness, and rebuked ungodliness, was the real objection against Him. He demanded the worship "of spirit and of truth:" they assumed a "form of godliness," pretended to outward sanctity, while within they were "full of hypocrisy and iniquity." How could such stand "before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in his temple?" So base was their state of heart, that they took no interest in the conversion of sinners, or the restoration of health to wretched sufferers. How could such dwell with Him, whose character it is to be "full of compassion and mercy, long-suffering, and of great goodness?" They "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, and would not suffer them that were entering to go in;" how should they be admitted into it themselves? They were unjust and violent, and extortionate and cruel: how could they have place with Him who loves justice and mercy? They exalted themselves and despised others: where was that meek and contrite spirit which God receives and approves, because it is the only state which befits a frail and guilty man?

Here then was a second reason, why they must be for ever excluded from that "new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Their dispositions, their characters, were a barrier against them. They were *from beneath*, He was *from above*: *they were of this world*; *He was not of this world*. So that *where He was, they could not come*. A moral gulf lay between them and Him. He was now offering to lead them across it, and to place them on the side of heaven: but they rejected the hand which He stretched out; and they would soon find the barrier impassable for

* Matt. xxiii. 28.

• Rev. vii. 15.

* Matt. xxiii. 13.

ever. *If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.*

This was not more seriously important to the Pharisees than it is to ourselves. "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart: in whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord."⁵ In those who are to dwell in heaven, there must be a suitableness to the nature of heaven. "For what fellowship hath light with darkness?" what communion has that which is *from beneath* with that which is *from above*? that which is of this world with that which is *not of this world*? Though it is not the will of God "that any should perish," we cannot but perceive that the character of the wicked excludes them from heaven: and their character remains what it is; because they "hate to be reformed," and "cast the words of God behind them."

Too late, there may be a time of sorrow and remorse. *Jesus said unto them, I go my way and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins.* The accepted time must be seized, the day of salvation not neglected. Such is the awful warning elsewhere pronounced to these same people. "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye shall begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are."⁶ *Where I am, ye cannot come.*

⁵ Ps. xv.

⁶ Luke xiii. 25.

LECTURE XXI.

JESUS PROMISES FREEDOM TO THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE TRUTH.

JOHN viii. 32.

32. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The truth shall make you free. Such is the effect which Jesus here ascribes to the words which He had delivered, to the doctrines which He came to reveal. They confer FREEDOM. We are hardly aware, how far the world in general is from being free. The Jews were not aware of the bondage in which they were held, as appears by their answer, which will afterwards come to be considered. They did not perceive that they were *servants of sin*. They did not perceive that Satan was their master, and kept them beneath his yoke. That yoke has many branches. Open and indulged sin is one : the first, from which THE TRUTH, "the truth as it is in Jesus," releases man.

But there is another chain by which men are tied and bound till they have obtained the same deliverance.

They are enslaved by the power of THE WORLD.

The cares, the treasures, the honours, the manners of the world, keep multitudes in a state, which may be justly termed a state of bondage. They are harassed by apprehensions that their store should grow less instead of greater : lest themselves, or their children, or their families, should be reduced to a worse condition than they were born to. Or they are in bondage to the opinions of men, and the customs which prevail : deterred from what they feel to be right, or seduced into what they feel to be wrong, or at least restrained from seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, through dread of their friends, their neigh-

bours, their companions. Can such be called free? Nicodemus was not free; when, though convinced that Jesus came from God by the mighty works He did, he dared not openly consult Him, but sought Him at night, that he might not offend his brethren the Pharisees. Those "chief rulers" were not free, whom we find mentioned afterwards, (xii. 42,) who, though perceiving that Jesus was the Christ, "did not confess Him, because of the Pharisees, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." Pilate was not free when he would gladly have done justice, and released Jesus, but dared not, lest he should offend the people, and be accused before Cæsar. Freedom, is to do what we see it best to do, what we desire to do. But all these desired to declare themselves on the side of Jesus: which yet they could not do, because they were bound by their love of this world, and enslaved by the fear of man.

Well then might the Lord say to these, and such as these, *The truth shall make you free*. The Gospel affords reasons and motives which both deliver a man from the shackles of worldly care, and raise him above the paltry dread of his fellow creatures. It enables him to act according to the dictates of his own conscience and his reason, to choose the real good, and reject the real evil. The martyr was free even at the stake, when he replied to his executioners, "You offer me present ease and present life; but my object is life and happiness eternal: and I can brave a present evil for the sake of an everlasting gain." And so it is in all things. When the truth of the Gospel is received into the heart, and made the principle of action, the man becomes *free indeed*: free to seek his highest good, his real interest, his everlasting advantage. For "this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith," our Christian faith; which enables a man to say, I fear my God, and have no other fear; I serve my God, and own no *other master*.

Another yoke, by which men are commonly weighed down, and from which the truth as it is in Jesus delivers them, is the FEAR OF DEATH. St. Paul speaks of this as an important result of the Redeemer's mercy : it delivers them, who "through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." It is a bondage, perhaps, which men are unwilling to own, and are hardly conscious of themselves. But it is bondage, to keep out of sight an enemy which must be at last encountered : to know that an event is certain, and yet use every art to exclude it from our thoughts. And how seldom is the fact steadily contemplated, that in a few years, at farthest, we shall be in the grave ! Even in illness, how seldom will friends, or nurses, or physicians, acknowledge what yet they believe to be the case ; this "sickness is unto death !" They know that the truth would be unwelcome, and therefore they conceal it.

From this bondage, *the truth* relieves the Christian. Not by deceiving him, and closing his eyes to what is really formidable ; but by opening his eyes to the way of safety. Not by making him careless and indifferent, which in such a case is want of reason ; but by giving him a ground, a solid ground of confidence. *The truth* is, that "there is no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus : " that He has made a full, perfect, and complete satisfaction for the sins of all that trust in Him : that God has covenanted to receive all such, as the "righteous," for whom his "kingdom is prepared." The heart of the Christian testifies within him, that this is his trust : he knows "in whom he has believed : " and his life bears outward witness to what his heart thus testifies within ; he walks "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Therefore death and judgment, and the world to come, are not strange things to one who *knows the truth* : things which he never loves to think of, never admits into his mind

¹ Heb. ii. 15.

from choice : but they make, as it were, a constituent part of this present life : and this world, and that which is to come, are as much united in his daily contemplations, as they are in fact connected by the will of the Almighty. And thus THE TRUTH has delivered him from that fear, to which others are continually in bondage. "For the sting of death is sin." "And the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

This is the freedom which the Lord had in view when He said to those Jews which believed in Him, *Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* This is part of "the glorious liberty of the sons of God ;" and accompanies that deliverance from the dominion of sin, which is the first achievement and effect of Christian faith.

And how encouraging the promise, *ye shall know the truth !* Ye shall seek it, and ye shall find it, if ye seek it with your whole heart. Ye shall not be left to yourselves, but the Spirit shall attend, assist, and direct your inquiry. You may not, indeed, immediately realise the promise. You may not at once perceive either the extent of your bondage by nature, or the completeness of that deliverance which Christ Jesus has effected for you. But in the end ye shall know it, *if ye continue in his word* : ye shall know that truth, which He who cannot deceive, selects from other truths which are in the world, and other truths which are in Scripture, and describes as *the truth*, the one important truth : and *that shall make you free.*

LECTURE XXII.

THE CHILDREN OF GOD DISTINGUISHED FROM THE CHILDREN
OF SATAN.

JOHN viii. 47.

47. "He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."

AN awful consideration is involved in these words. There are those who are of God, and those who are not of God: "children of light," and "children of darkness;" "children of the kingdom," and "children of the wicked one." These "grow up together until the harvest;" and then each is gathered into his own place: the children of the wicked one are cast into outer darkness, "the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father."

Of which family do we form a part? This is the truly important question. And two proofs are given in this chapter, by which the truth may be ascertained. *Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded and came forth from God.* This is the first sign. To see Jesus Christ as the object of reverence and affection, is the first proof of a child of God. The Apostles make it so. Whosoever loveth the Father, loveth also the Son.¹ "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha."² To the children of this world, He is the object of scorn or enmity. Of scorn, because He bids them renounce things temporal for thing eternal: and of enmity, because He "reproves them of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." But "to them that believe He is precious," because He gives them a hope on which they can depend, a foundation on which they may stand secure. His

¹ 1 John v. 1.² 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

person is precious ; for He was wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities. His promises are precious ; for He has declared himself a refuge to all the weary and heavy laden : and has engaged that whosoever cometh unto Him, He " will in no wise cast out." Let men be once taught of God to see their own weakness, sinfulness, nothingness, and Jesus receives all the love which is due to a deliverer, a protector, a friend, a brother.

The second sign of belonging to God's family is, that we receive his words. *He that is of God, heareth God's words.* The son does not reject the absent father's message ; he studies it, prizes it, desires to fulfil it. " The words of God are verity and judgment ; all His commandments are true." But those do not hearken to them, who are not of God. He requires sincerity, purity, integrity, charity, temperance. He declares that without these qualities no one can enter into his kingdom. This must be distasteful to " the children of disobedience : " they are *of their father the devil, and the lusts of that father they will do.* But they that *are of God* hear these words with reverence, and their hearts answer to them. They respond to them with their reason and conscience ; they " delight in the law of God after the inner man : " and if flesh and blood, if the natural and corrupt elements rebel against it, this attaches them still more closely to Him on whose grace they depend, and who " is able to save unto the uttermost."

Inquire then of yourselves, according to these two tests. Do you unite with the Psalmist, when he says, " How dear are thy counsels unto me, O God ! More to be desired are they than gold ; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." Do you agree with the Apostle, when he describes the feeling of the Christian towards his Saviour ? " Whom having not seen, ye love ; and in whom, though now ye see Him *not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable.*"

For if ye are "born of God," ye love Him who *proceeded forth and came from God*: if ye are the "children of God," ye *hear your Father's words*.

LECTURE XXIII.

CHRIST DESCRIBES HIMSELF AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

JOHN x. 11, 14.

11. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."
 14. "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."

IN his former words, our Lord had described himself as the door of the sheepfold: the door by which the shepherds must find admission to the flock, the entrance by which both shepherds and their flocks must seek access to the Father.

This leads him to another comparison. He is not only the door of the fold, but He is also the guardian of those within the fold: He fulfils the prophetic promise; He "feeds his flock like a shepherd."

He was *the good shepherd*. And there was a proof of it. He would *give his life for the sheep*. Not as *the hireling, whose own the sheep are not*, and who would neither risk any thing for their safety, nor sacrifice any thing for their good. Very different was the case of Him who purchased the flock with his own blood: and who could say, *I lay down my life for the sheep: I know my sheep and am known of mine*.

These two sentences well deserve remark: *I know my sheep; and am known of mine*.

When we look out into the world in a moral view, it appears a scene of confusion. And it is a comfort to those who have hearkened to the words of God

speaking to them in the Gospel, that they have this assurance ; " the Lord knoweth them that are his." Perhaps they are little known by men, and still less understood : but whether they are approved and admired, or misrepresented and scorned ; whether they are justly valued, or unjustly despised ; they are at least seen and known according to their true character, by Him whom they love and serve. Some may overlook them, for the disciple of Christ does not push himself forward ; some many condemn them, for many think that they are following a shadow ; some may think them hypocrites, for much that is undeserved is often laid to their charge ; but however this be, their heavenly Shepherd sees and distinguishes them, and judges them according to what they are, and not according to what they are not. *I know my sheep*, He has said. This proves the aptness of the comparison, which likens Him to a shepherd, and his followers to a flock. For a stranger and common observer, looking towards a flock of sheep, would confound one with another, and think it impossible to discern between them ; while their shepherd, from the close attention and diligent care with which he has been long used to mark and study them, can tell them all ; and knows them by signs which another could neither perceive nor understand.

2. But this is not all that we are told. We are further assured, that as the shepherd knows the sheep, so the sheep their shepherd. *I know my sheep, and am known of mine.* They do not indeed know Him by the hearing of the ear, or by the seeing of the eye. He is far above out of their sight, and his disciples, to whom He was at this time speaking, knew Him in a way in which we cannot know Him now. But this does not hinder our knowing Him in a true and proper sense ; that is, our trusting Him, loving Him, and serving Him. The case is like that of a father, who may be in a foreign country ; but who maintains, and educates, and exhorts, and advises, a child that remains at home.

The child knows that father, though without seeing him. He knows what he is to the father, and what the father is to him, and what he does for him. In the same manner do the sheep of Christ know their shepherd. They "have not seen, and yet have believed." As St. Peter says, "Whom, not having seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." He has left his invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden." They have heard this call, as if addressed to themselves: and they have attended to it, and have come to Him by faith and prayer, and have desired to escape from a dangerous world, and to place themselves within his fold. Thus they have joined themselves to his flock, sought shelter under his care, and know in whom they are trusting. When, therefore, Jesus has left this truth written, *I am known of mine*, he means that He is known by those who trust in Him, not in a visionary or enthusiastic manner, not by dreams or fancies; but in that sober, intelligent way in which a parent is known by his children, or a master by his servant, or a commander by his soldiers. They know Him as the child knows that he looks to his parent for support; as a servant knows that he looks to his master for direction; as the soldier looks up to his commander, for encouragement and example. In this way the Christian depends on Christ, in his passage through the world: takes Him as his pattern, obeys Him as his Lord, reverences Him as the author of his spiritual being, and loves Him as the giver of eternal life.

Let all ask themselves, whether the Lord Jesus is thus known to them? If they belong to the true flock, they must have this acquaintance with their Shepherd.

And great indeed is the comfort springing from these words. The world in which we live has been reduced by sin to a state, which makes it no longer a pasture in

which God's people may enjoy themselves, but a wilderness in which they are too likely to go astray. But in this wilderness there is still a fold, and those within it shall dwell safely; and in this fold a flock is gathered together;—of all ages, some young, and some old; and of all ranks, some high, and many low: and over this flock a shepherd watches, and knows every one, whether young or old, rich or poor,—knows every one that is his own. And He too, in his turn, is known by them: they are conscious that they are not alone; their shepherd careth for them; and under his guidance they “shall never perish;” for He came that they “might have life, and have it more abundantly.”

LECTURE XXIV.

JESUS DESCRIBES HIS FLOCK, AS HEARING HIS VOICE AND FOLLOWING HIM.

JOHN i. 27, 28.

27. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
 28. “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”

HERE, again, Jesus compares those who believe in Him to a flock, “the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.” He speaks of them as being given him of his Father, to be redeemed by his blood, sanctified by his grace, and reserved for an eternal inheritance: defended by his own power, and his Father's power, from the temptations of the world and the malice of Satan. *I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man (any one) pluck them out of my hand.*

Thus close is the connexion between the Redeemer *and the redeemed.* But the same scripture which

declares their privileges, describes also their character by marks which cannot be mistaken. *My sheep hear my voice ; and I know them, and they follow me.*

The first sign, then, by which the Lord knows his flock, is, that they *hear his voice*. They hear his voice, saying unto them, "Repent ye ; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." This is the first voice they hear, calling them to renounce a perishing world, and to shun the deceitfulness of sin, and to seek an eternal inheritance. But it is not once only that they hear his summons. Sheep that are well attended, are constantly obedient to their shepherd's voice ; and the sheep of Christ are always anxious to hear and receive his word. There they find comfort and instruction : they read it, they pray over it, they meditate upon it, they prize it above all things : saying, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law : " may be guarded by its warnings, led by its directions, and supported by its promises. Whatever conveys to them the mind and will of their good Shepherd, they humbly and willingly receive.

Thus they hear the Redeemer's voice : and I should add, they hear no other. The flock of Christ "will not follow a stranger, but flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers." One may come, and beckon them out of the safe pasture, out of the straightforward road of the Bible. Some may allure them with the pleasures of sin, others may promise them the treasures of this world : or some may pretend that there are other ways of reaching heaven, besides that which Christ has taught ; that there is no need of becoming "a peculiar people," purified by the Holy Spirit, and "redeemed from all iniquity."

Some there have been, and always will be, to say such things ; but this is the voice of strangers : the true flock will not listen to it, but will answer at once, This is not the voice which I have been accustomed to hear : I know it not, neither will I follow it, for it will lead me to destruction.

Observe now the second mark by which, as we are here told, the Shepherd distinguishes his sheep.—*They follow him.* The Scripture sets before them the path which their Saviour trod : and their endeavour is, to follow his steps. In this country, indeed, the sheep do not commonly follow after the shepherd, but go before him. But in many countries the shepherd still leads the way, and the flock follow him into that pasture where he intends them to feed. According to this practice, our Lord says, *my sheep follow me.* And follow Him they must, if they would be known as his, here or hereafter.

They must follow Him in HOLINESS. His language is, “ Be ye holy, for I am holy.” “ Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” They must follow Him also in LOVE. By this, He says, “ shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye have love one towards another.” “ The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.” They must follow Him too in SELF-DENIAL. He has expressly said, “ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” They must follow Him in MEEKNESS, in HUMILITY. “ This mind must be in them, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Thus in a quiet and lowly spirit, in a spirit which pleases not itself, in charity of heart and practice, in a pure and blameless life, must the sheep of Christ tread in their Shepherd's path, as they walk towards their Shepherd's heavenly fold. And those who are walking thus, are the flock of whom Jesus spoke, when he said, *They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck*

them out of my hand. He says it not of those, although they may be called by his name, who range the world at pleasure, doing what they list, and going where their evil inclinations lead them : but He says it of those who place themselves under his care, are directed by his guidance, and governed by his rules. These have a protection which nothing can overcome : they have a power around them and within them, which, notwithstanding many conflicts and many trials, will finally prevail. He whose call they have heard, whose voice they have followed, shall *give unto them eternal life.* "For it is not the will of his Father which is in heaven," that one of the flock of Christ shall ever perish.

LECTURE XXV.

THE HEARTS OF THE JEWS ARE HARDENED THROUGH UNBELIEF.

JOHN xii. 37—40.

37. "But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him :
 38. "That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?
 39. "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,
 40. He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."

JESUS had given a solemn warning to the Jews ; *Yet a little while is the light with you. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.*

But, adds St. John, *though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him.* As Isaiah had given reason to expect, when he prefaced his well-known prophecy, by asking, *Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord*

revealed ?¹ And again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart ; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

We perceive, therefore, that something more is necessary to FAITH, than sufficient evidence. These had sufficient evidence, in the many miracles which He had done. These had sufficient evidence, for many were convinced by it. *Among the chief rulers also many believed on Him ; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

It was not, therefore, evidence which was wanting, but a heart to receive evidence, to act upon conviction. And this heart man has not in himself ; it is the gift of God, the work of the Holy Spirit. "No man can come unto me, (our Lord had already said,) unless the Father who hath sent me draw him." The case was exactly the same with their forefathers in the wilderness, (Deut. xxix. 2—4,) when "Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land ; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles : yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day."

What shall we say then ? Is there unrighteousness with God ? Is He as one who "takes up that He laid not down, and reaps that He did not sow ?" * This, we know, can never be. "God willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live." And He calls upon the inhabitants of the whole earth to witness his dealings with his people : (Isa. v. 3 :) "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and

¹ Isa. liii. 1 ; and vi. 10.

* See Luke xix. 21.

my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" The fault, then, must have been in the Jews themselves, whose hearts were hardened. Let us consider their behaviour.

Jesus did among them works beyond the power of man. They could not deny it. What then? Did they come forward in a body, and acknowledge with Nicodemus, "Thou art a teacher come from God"? Or say, like Simon Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"? No: they perverted the people's minds by affirming, "This man doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils:"² and agreed, that "if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue."⁴

Again, in the course of Jesus's teaching, many things fell from Him which they either could not understand, or did not like to understand. What did they then? Wait for further instruction? Inquire humbly, examine patiently? No. They complained, "This is a hard saying: who can hear it? From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with Him."⁵

Others heard what they could not refute, and saw what they could not deny. *But, as we are here told, because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.*

Now without doubt God could have so changed the hearts of all these persons, that they should have cast away their worldly fears, and their presumptuous murmurings, and their obstinate defiance, and have fallen on their knees before Jesus, confessing, "Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." He did this in the case of Saul, and stopped his career of malice and blasphemy. "He will have mercy on

² Matt. xii. 24.

⁴ John ix. 22.

⁵ John vi. 60. 66.

whom He will have mercy." "And who art thou, O man, who repliest against God?"⁶

But such is not the usual course of his dealings with men. "The earth which drinketh in the rain which cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God." This is the ordinary rule. While "he that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."⁷ So it proved with this generation;—as Isaiah had foretold, *He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted.* There is nothing uncommon either in the conduct of the Jews, their hardness of heart; or in its consequence their rejection. Some of them turned away their eyes from evident truth: could not deny it, but would not see it. How many do the same! cast aside the book which they are unable to refute, but unwilling to be ruled by:—avoid the preacher, who presses closely upon their consciences, with much the same words perhaps as were used towards our Lord himself:—"He perverteth the people:"—"we know not whence He is."

Others of the Jews stifled conviction. "This man doth many miracles: but if we let him alone, the Romans will come and take away our place and nation." Or, *because of the Pharisees, did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.* How many do likewise; and are led by some worldly reasons to resist the impression of their conscience! They engross themselves in continual cares: never leave their minds unoccupied; feel an inward sense that all is not right, yet do not live as disciples of Christ, because of the habits to which they are attached, the companions or the pleasures which they do not choose to resign.

And shall it be said, that God is unrighteous, if He

⁶ See Rom. ix. 16. 19.

⁷ Heb. vi. 7.

⁸ Prov. xxix. 1.

leaves such hearts in their barren lifeless state, and that in calling them to account hereafter, he is as one who seeks to reap where he has not sown?" The truth is, that men "WILL NOT come unto Him that they might have life." How often would He have gathered his children together, "even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and they WOULD NOT?" They WOULD NOT: and have left us a warning "lest there be in any an evil heart of unbelief," so as to "receive the grace of God in vain." Rather "seek the Lord, while He may be found, call upon him while He is near:" and *walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you.*

LECTURE XXVI.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO KEEP THE WORDS OF CHRIST.

JOHN xiv. 23.

23. "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we¹ will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

IN this clear and decisive manner is expressed the spiritual presence of God with his people. This is not unusual in Scripture. He who has made God his portion is said to dwell with God; as (Ps. xci. 1) "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." And again, God is said to make his abode with those who are his people: (Isa. lvii. 15:) "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

² Matt. xxiii. 37.

¹ The Father and Son: personally distinct, though essentially the same: therefore the plural form is used; *we will come unto him.*

This is indeed a great promise : but not greater than is fulfilled, sensibly and certainly fulfilled. Its fulfilment is evident in many ways. First, by the gradual departure of those other inmates which ought never to have a place in the heart, but which will surely abide there till the Spirit of God dislodge them ; evil passions, worldly cares and desires. And then, the presence of God will be made manifest by such an habitual state of the soul as nothing else could produce. The disposition of the heart is changed : perhaps from what it has been formerly ; certainly from what it would be, if God were not dwelling there.

This change is evident, especially in two particulars. First, an indifference towards worldly things. The affections are set "on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God : " and therefore worldly pleasures have little power to interest : worldly advantages are light in the balance, when weighed against things eternal : it is perceived, that worldly riches may bring danger, as well as purchase enjoyment : and thus, they that gain are enabled to be as though they possessed not ; and they that lose as though they lost not ; and they that are honoured, to regard the honour which cometh from God only ; and they that are lightly esteemed for Christ's sake, to count it their glory. Thus there is plain evidence that He who is not with all men has *come unto them, and is making his abode with them.*

And this is seen, further, in the comfort, and tranquillity, and peace of mind, which they enjoy. As the blessings of life do not unduly transport them, so neither do its trials and sorrows overwhelm them. Exactly at the time when it is needed, God makes his presence known, and cheers their hearts, as the sun cheers the earth with a genial ray of warmth and comfort which nothing can either exclude or imitate. So that the Christian can sometimes say that the "bed of *languishing*" has been dearer to him than the bed of

health: the days of privation sweeter than the days of possession; the season of sorrow more worthy to be remembered than the season of rejoicing; because he has enjoyed the presence of God in a higher measure and a more perceptible manner. In the multitude of sorrows which he had in his heart, that comfort has refreshed his soul. As the hiding of God's face, the want of spiritual light, can turn the brightest earthly scene to gloom and darkness; so the manifestation of his Spirit in the soul can enliven the house of mourning, and clothe the distressed heart with the "garment of praise."

Is this blessing desirable, so that nothing else can be compared with it? See then the way, the only way, in which it may be obtained, and cherished, and secured. *Jesus said, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

LECTURE XXVII.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

MARK xv. 25, 28.

25. "And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

28. "And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors."

THUS was Jesus accused as a transgressor, condemned as a transgressor, crucified as a transgressor. Because it pleased Him to stand in the transgressor's place. It pleased Him to suffer for sin, who "was without spot of sin." The innocent bore the punishment of the guilty, the just died for the unjust, that He might make reconciliation for their iniquities, and procure their peace with God.

We know why this was required. We know how, from the time when Adam sinned, and brought his own corruption and condemnation upon the whole race of his posterity, man became a debtor to God's justice. He is "the king of all the earth." Shall man rebel against his rightful sovereign, and no punishment ensue? Can God behold with the same eyes righteousness and unrighteousness? We are assured, that He "cannot look upon evil." What then remains? On one side, God offended—His will despised—His authority defied. On the other side, sinful, helpless, wretched man. What remains, but "tribulation and anguish?" What, but "the terrors of the Lord?" "the blackness of darkness for ever;" "outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth?"

Such must have been the end, if the Son had not consented to stand in the stead of our guilty race, and said, "Lo I come to do thy will, O God. I am content to do it." And then could God say, "Deliver them *from going down into the pit*, for I have found a ransom."

He was a sufficient ransom, who, being without sin, could atone for man's guilt: He was our ransom, who, taking our nature upon Him, could die our death, suffer our penalty. "His human nature did put a price into his hands to lay down for the redemption of our souls; and his divine nature did put a value upon that price and made it sufficient and responsible for all the purposes of God."¹

Thus He, who was without transgression, came to be *numbered with the transgressors*. And God permitted, nay, decreed it, that He might show himself at the same time just in punishing sin, and merciful in pardoning the penitent. This was the design from the beginning, that justice and mercy might agree together; that God might display to all the world the heinousness of sin, and yet might remit its penalty. * * * Because of our sinful nature, Christ died. "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities," that He might "bring us to God," as his penitent, and reconciled, and obedient children. "He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."² He "is the propitiation for our sins," to the end that we may "present ourselves, our souls and bodies, a holy and willing sacrifice unto God," and "glorify Him in our body and our spirit, which are his."³ And to "continue in sin," whilst we profess the faith of Him who came to save us from our sins, would be to "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame."⁴

¹ Manton. Serm. on John i. 29.

² Tit. ii. 14.

³ Rom. xii. 1. 1 Cor. vi. 20.

⁴ Heb. vi. 6.



LECTURE XXVIII.

THE SCHEME OF REDEMPTION ACCOMPLISHED.

JOHN xix. 30.

30. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

It is finished. Much that we know, and much more that is too mysterious to be known, is contained in this word. That has been finished which was predicted at the first, that the serpent should "bruise the heel" of the woman's seed, as the seed should "bruise the serpent's head." This was done: the prince of darkness had had his hour, and now his dominion was broken, his power weakened, his "works destroyed."

That was finished which had been prefigured in the law, by the rite of the passover, by the daily sacrifices, by the various purifications, by the office of the high priest, by all the types of that sacrifice for sin which Christ had now once offered: and "by that one offering had perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

That was finished which Isaiah had prophesied, (liii. 7, 8,) speaking beforehand of the sufferings of Christ. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken."

That was finished which Christ had engaged for when He undertook the work of redemption: all the will and counsel of God. He had "made his soul an offering for sin; He had borne the sin of many:" He

¹ John iii. 8.² Heb. x. 14.

had endured the Father's wrath, He had submitted to the curse, He had drunk the cup of suffering to the dregs. All this had been completely finished; and nothing now remained but to return to the bosom of the Father. But Jesus showed, even to the end, that He had "power to lay down his life;" that He "laid it down of himself, and no man took it from him." For He waited till the last prophecy had been fulfilled, and He had tasted of the vinegar which they offered him. He waited till He was able to say, *It is finished*. And then He added, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

All had been completed which the Son was to perform in the work of man's redemption. Let no man doubt that the Father's part shall also be completed. Christ "once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." And God, who "so loved the world, that He sent his only begotten Son," that He might thus suffer: God "is not unrighteous" to refuse the ransom which has been paid, or to reject those who come to Him through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Christ could say, *It is finished*. And as the conditions have been finished, so likewise shall the covenant be fulfilled. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: because He hath poured out his soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors: and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."^a

^a Isa. liiii. 11, 12.

LECTURE XXIX.

ANGELS DECLARE TO THE WOMEN ASSEMBLED AT THE TOMB OF
JESUS, THAT HE IS RISEN.

LUKE xxiv. 1—12.

(Matt. xxviii. 1—8. Mark xvi. 1—8. John xx. 1—10.)

1. "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them."

THE death of Jesus had so completely dismayed his followers, that the assurance which He had given them of his resurrection seems to have vanished from their minds. He had often, and in many different ways, repeated to them the truth, that He "must be killed, and the third day rise again." He had spoken of it in the way of figure, saying to the Jews, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up;" when "He spake of the temple of his body."¹ He had affirmed it plainly; for, going up to Jerusalem, (Matt. xx. 17,) He "took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him: and the third day He shall rise again." He had appealed to this event as the great proof of his truth; saying, (Matt. xii. 39,) "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." And his enemies had been less forgetful than his friends. For after the body had been laid in the tomb, (Matt. xxvii. 63,) the chief

¹ John ii. 19.

priests and Pharisees went to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead."

His disciples, however, thought of nothing less. They resigned themselves to disappointment and sorrow, and had no other desire than that of paying the last tribute to his lifeless body. *The women which came with him from Galilee followed, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day, according to the commandment:* and now, very early in the morning of the third day, *they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared.* We even know the subject on which they were communing as they approached the place. They were not saying to one another, "Now we shall see the fulfilment of prophecy, and the truth of our Master's words:" but they were doubting together, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? For it was very great."^a This difficulty was soon removed: but it only cleared the way to fresh astonishment.

2. "And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.
3. "And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.
4. "And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:
5. "And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?
6. "He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee,
7. "Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.
8. "And they remembered his words,
9. "And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

^a Mark xvi. 3.

10. "It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the Apostles.
11. "And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.
12. "Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass."

So slowly is the mind reconciled to truths which oppose our preconceived ideas! To Peter and the rest, the death of Jesus was a new and unexpected thing: they could not receive it, or reason upon it. So likewise his resurrection. The resurrection of the body made no part of their religious expectations. An actual example, it seems, like this, was needed, to conquer incredulity, and establish the assurance that all men shall rise again with their bodies.

God saw fit to send his angels, and dispel the doubts of the disciples. *They said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spake unto you.*

It was indeed great ignorance of all that Jesus was, and of all that had been foretold concerning Him, to seek among the dead for Him, the living God. HE could not lie imprisoned in the tomb, who "was in the beginning with God, and was God:" "who has life in Himself, and quickeneth whom He will." The prophecy concerning Him must be fulfilled,—*"Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."*

Therefore the angels might justly rebuke these disconsolate mourners, and say, *Why seek ye the living among the dead?* Have you been so slow to discover the character, so slow to perceive the power of your divine Master, so dull to comprehend his words, as to think that He who gave life, is not also able to resume it at his will? *He is not here, but is risen:* your own eyes shall have the proof of it, before He ascends above to that place where ye must hereafter seek Him, on the

right hand of the Majesty on high. "He goeth before you into Galilee : there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you."

Two remarks arise from this. One has been expressed by St. Paul in writing to the Thessalonians, and offers a comfortable thought to those whose friends have been removed from this world (1 Thess. iv. 13). "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Number not the living among the dead. Those for whom we weep are still living : they have entered upon an immortal and a blessed existence : they are not lying in the grave ; they are risen to their Saviour and their God. Grieve not that they should "depart and be with Christ."

2. But there is a spiritual, as well as a bodily resurrection : and in that sense the words, *Why seek ye the living among the dead ?* ought to apply to the Christian in this present world. The apostle so applies them ; and speaks of Christians as already "risen ;"—"risen with Christ." Christ was not like the children of men. Their bodies perish ; his could not perish in the grave. So, too, the Christian is not like other men, whose thoughts are fixed upon the earth ; who are dead to God, dead to the concerns of the soul. But the Christian is "alive unto God, through Jesus Christ." He must not be sought among the dead ; he must not be found among the dead ; he must not be found in the ways and haunts of sinners ; he must not be sought among those who have none of the life of God within them ; but among those whose "conversation is in heaven." If Christ had not risen, it had been evidence that He was not the Son of God. And so, if the Christian does not rise above the cares,

^a Mark xvi. 7.

and desires, and pursuits, and pleasures of this present evil world, it is proof that he is not what he calls himself; he must still be reckoned among the dead.

That therefore which the angels affirmed of Christ, is also, in its measure, true of those who believe in Christ. *They are not here, but are risen.* Their body, indeed, is still in this world: but their better part, the soul, is risen above it, and is dwelling in heaven with their Lord and Saviour. There are their affections set: thither they mount above the trifling cares and more trifling amusements of the present life: there their treasure is; and where their treasure is, there will their hearts be also.

Let none rest satisfied, until their consciences and their lives bear witness that this is, in some tolerable degree, a description of themselves.

LECTURE XXX.

UNBELIEF OF THOMAS.—BLESSEDNESS OF BELIEVERS.

JOHN xx. 29. 31.

29. "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

A PROOF of Christ's resurrection, of his resurrection in the same body which had died, was here given to Thomas, which banished every doubt. But it is a proof which others can never see. And he was allowed to require it, and it was granted him, to confirm the faith and increase the comfort of future Christians. *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed.*

It was needful that the Lord should be seen in the form of man by those who were to bear witness concerning him. It was needful that some should be able

to say, like St. John, "The Word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory." We saw his miracles, and we heard his discourses.

So again, after his resurrection, He was seen not by the apostles only, but "by above five hundred brethren at once."¹ They saw, and *because they saw, believed.*

But He could not possibly be seen by those who were hereafter to become his disciples, and have life through his name. These must believe in Him "through their word:" that is, on the report of those who had lived with Him in the flesh, and witnessed his death and his ascension.

Looking forward to these, the Lord declares to his incredulous apostle, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* Like those to whom St. Peter wrote, and of whom he speaks, after mentioning the name of Christ: "whom not having seen, ye love; and in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Our Lord has left to these, and such as these, the comfort of knowing that they were in his mind, and graciously thought of, from the moment when the salvation wrought by Him was about to be published to the world. He pronounces them BLESSED. Let us consider why.

They are at peace with God. "Being justified by faith, they have peace with God through Jesus Christ." And without this there is no peace. The desire of it first led them to the Redeemer. The desire of it first brought them to apply to Him, and completed in their own persons the covenant of their baptism. And this they possess and enjoy: it is not a blessing for which they are to wait till some future time: of which they are to have no present sense or knowledge; they are not to linger in hope that the favour of God, his acceptance of their persons, his forgiveness of their sins, will be made over to them at some distant day:

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 5.

but it is already theirs ; and their privilege is, in the language of the Liturgy, "being cleansed from their sins, to serve God with a quiet mind."

This is the foundation of their blessedness. They are blessed, also, because they are delivered from "the dominion of sin," delivered from this present evil world, "and enabled through the Spirit working in them to subdue the lusts of the flesh." They are blessed, also, because they have secured to themselves, as they pass through this weary wilderness, a shepherd full of kindness, full of care, and full of power. They have the confidence expressed by St. Paul, "My God shall supply all your need." They have the assurance which was granted to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

In all this there is as much of blessedness, as the present life is capable of receiving.

Still it is our present life : and it is life in a fallen world. The sinfulness which adheres to the heart, even after the power of sin is broken, still interrupts and disturbs its peace. And the many wants, the many afflictions which exist, and from which the children of God are not exempted, often make us confess and feel, that here is not our hope : that the blessedness promised to the Christian is something which cannot be found below : that he must set his affections on things above, and look there, at God's right hand, for "the fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."

And this is the real cause, why the Lord here so solemnly pronounces those blessed who believe : because theirs is the kingdom prepared of God for the righteous ; because theirs are the good things which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." We grievously undervalue this : our spirits, tied and bound by this present world, are unable to think of it as it deserves. But our Lord knew, well and fully knew, the nature, and the reality, and the extent of that happiness. He had a complete acquaintance with the things laid up at God's right

hand for them that love Him : and therefore he says, *Blessed are they that have believed*, because they shall possess those joys. At the moment, they may not feel themselves blessed. But He to whom the future is present ; He to whom what shall be is as if it were, He sees beyond their trials, their labours, and their sorrows, and anticipates the end. He knew, for example, that his apostles should suffer all that makes this life grievous ; imprisonment, the scourge, reproach, hunger, cold, and nakedness. Yet He said, "Blessed are ye ; for great is your reward in heaven." He knew that his followers would often groan heavily in spirit, being burthened with the sense of their inward corruptions and rebellious desires. Yet He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." He knew that many of those whom God would hereafter give Him, would languish in poverty, would be oppressed by sickness and by pain. Yet he said, "Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh." The case may be compared to what took place at the death of the first martyr, Stephen. Those who stood by, and saw him stretched along the ground, bleeding, and bruised, and maimed, and gasping for breath, might pity him, as if brought to the lowest state of human wretchedness. But what was his real feeling and condition ? "Behold," he exclaims, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God."* And so the Lord Jesus. He is well aware that grief and trial and tribulation are the lot of many of his own people. But He sees also the heavens opened, and the earth receding :—earth receding, with all its load of sin and misery ; and the heavens opening with all the glory which is to be revealed :—and therefore He says, *Blessed are they that have believed* ; for there shall be a performance of those things which were spoken of the Lord.

These are the thoughts which may animate the

* Acts vii. 56.

faithful disciple of Christ under all the trials and difficulties of his earthly warfare. His Lord, who knew them all; has pronounced him *blessed*. And he is blessed. Blessed now in the favour and support of Almighty God : and—what is alone important in the sight of infinite wisdom—blessed for eternity.

One thing only remains : but it is all important. Have we believed ? *Not having seen, have we believed ?* Not having received the promises, but “ having seen them afar off, and been persuaded of them.” Let our hearts reply, and our lives prove this : that the Spirit of God may “ bear witness with our spirit,” that we are “ sealed by him unto the day of redemption.”

31. “ But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing, ye might have life through his name.”

These are written, *that ye might believe*. “ Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” This is the beginning ; but who shall describe the end ? That believing, *ye might have life through his name* :—might have that life here, which deserves to be called life ; when the soul which actuates the man is itself actuated by God, directed by his Spirit : and might have that life hereafter, which man must come to, before he can justly conceive or duly prize it ; but which those to whom the most has been revealed of its nature, have been the most afraid of forfeiting, most eager to secure by the practice of their lives, or, if needful, by the constancy of their deaths.

And of that everlasting happiness it may form some share, to know those things which here cannot be known : those which the present world could not contain or receive : but which may be the grateful contemplation through eternity, of that “ great multitude, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,” who have been delivered by them from this present

evil world, and brought to "know the only true God," through "Jesus Christ whom He hath sent." The secrets of redemption, we are assured, are a wonder even to beings who are not individually concerned in "the mystery of godliness." "These things the angels desire to look into."⁴ How astonishing will all that relates to that hidden mystery,⁵ all *the things which Jesus did*, appear to those who have been thus "brought from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God!"

Let every individual make it sure that such is his own case. Let us not be satisfied, till by self-inquiry, and reflection, and prayer, by comparing our lives and our thoughts with the word of God, we can render it plain to ourselves that we are amongst those who "believe in Jesus Christ, and have life through his name."

LECTURE XXXI.

SALVATION BY FAITH IN CHRIST.

MARK xvi. 16.

16. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

THESE were the terms in which the message of God was to be carried through the world. It was to be addressed to mankind as in a lost or ruined state; it was to offer them deliverance from that state, for the sake of what Christ had done, on the condition of their becoming his disciples. As many as received the offer, and were baptized in the name of Jesus, should be placed in a new state towards God, being no longer under his wrath, which Jesus had taken away; and should be enabled to lead a new life, a life of righte-

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 12.

⁵ See Eph. iii. 5 and 9.

ousness and holiness. Being justified by the atonement made for sin upon the cross, which they had embraced in faith, in reliance upon its all-sufficiency, they should have peace with God, and walking not after the flesh but after the spirit, they should be saved.¹

We must consider, however, what is meant, when it is declared, *He that believeth shall be saved*. It is not in the way of reward or punishment, but from the nature of the case, that all depends upon our believing or not believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God who "taketh away the sin of the world."

The gospel is proposed to us as a remedy which can only be received by being trusted. Jesus Christ is set before us as the physician, who has in Himself, and who alone has, the remedy of sin, and of the effects of sin. So that whosoever believes in Him, resigns and devotes himself to Him, has life, because he has the remedy against death; whilst one who "has not the Son of God, has not life,"² remains under condemnation, because he has not believed in the name of Him who offers to reverse his sentence of condemnation, and set him free.

It may illustrate this, if we suppose a land to be ravaged by a pestilence, threatening to overwhelm both young and old with general destruction. This is no far-fetched example; for sin is such a pestilence, and affects by its virulence the whole race of mankind.

Suppose, farther, a physician to traverse this infected country, and promise an antidote which should preserve from danger as many as applied to him. Such is the offer of Christ. "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."³

In that country there would soon be found three classes of persons. There would be some who neglected all precaution, distrusted the physician alto-

¹ Rom. v. 1: viii. 1.

² 1 John v. 12.

³ John v. 24.

gether, and were satisfied to take their chance with others. There would be some, who did not doubt the physician's skill, or the efficacy of his remedy: but finding that it required much care and self-denial, a change in their manner of living, and habits different from those around them, they would silently reject it, and prefer the unseen evil to the immediate trouble of the cure. Whilst a third class would be found so convinced of the impending danger, and so confident of the physician's skill, as to apply for his advice and obey his counsels, relying on his word and promise, at whatever pains, whatever sacrifice of present inclination.

And this third class, believing the physician, and acting on their belief, would be saved: whilst they who disbelieved, and they who acted as if they disbelieved, would be left to perish: would remain liable to the pestilence which sooner or later would lead to their destruction, because they refused the only remedy which could avert it and preserve them. Still the cause of their death would be the pestilence, and not the refusal of the remedy. No doubt their condition would be the more lamentable, because the remedy had come nigh them, and they rejected it. But neither the offer of the remedy, nor their refusal, would place them in their desperate state: it was their state before, as inhabitants of the country which the pestilence had entered, and where it raged. Like the sons-in-law of Lot, whom he warned to flee with him from Sodom: and "he seemed to them as one that mocked:"⁴ they refused to listen to him. When the Lord rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom out of heaven, they were swallowed up in the destruction. Yet they did not perish, because they rejected his counsel; but rejecting his counsel, they perished together with their countrymen. And therefore our Lord, when He declared, that whoever believed on

⁴ Gen. xix. 14.

Him should "not be condemned;" added also, "He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God," who alone could avert his condemnation. "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him:"⁵ he has not escaped it through the appointed way of reconciliation.

Let us rejoice in the assurance, *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.* There is a physician, who is come to seek and to save those that without Him were abandoned to a devouring pestilence. There is an ark of safety, which we are invited to enter, and be secure; there is an unshaken rock, on which we can rest our souls. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: and that He is able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God through Him."⁶

⁵ John iii. 18. 36.

⁶ 1 Tim. i. 15. Heb. vii. 25.



EXPOSITORY LECTURES.



PART II.

ON CHRISTIAN PRACTICE.



LECTURE I.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE HUMBLE, THE PENITENT, AND
THE MEEK.

MATT. v. 1—5.

1. "And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain; and when He was set, his disciples came unto Him."

THE discourse which our Lord delivered on this occasion requires our most serious attention. He unfolds in it the character which is acceptable to God. And He exposes the false opinions which prevailed generally amongst the Jews, and the corruptions of their religion through the erroneous teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees. He spoke from *a mountain* or elevated spot, that as many as possible might surround him and listen. But there is a higher elevation from which He speaks to all: He speaks from heaven: though once, that the inhabitants of the earth might better hear, He descended from his heavenly abode to instruct the ignorance of the world, to reclaim its wickedness, and guide it into righteousness and truth.

Let us then turn a deaf ear to the opinions of the world, which have not yet been brought into conformity with the opinions of Christ. Let us consider that "we are all here present before God," to hear the truths which He has sanctioned; to hear, upon the most important of all concerns, the declarations of a judgment which can neither deceive nor be deceived.

2. "And He opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,
3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
5. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

These three characters are quite distinct. But the spirit that belongs to them all is so similar that they

may be considered together. The man *poor in spirit* is the man who sees his need of divine mercy : who trembles at the distance between himself and the law of God ; whose language is that of David, " Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." The *mourner* is the man who sees and laments his wickedness ; and says with the same David, " I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." The *meek* spirit is shown towards our fellow creatures ; but it springs out of a humble spirit towards God. He who feels his own wants, his own short-comings, his own offences, will have too low an opinion of himself to be haughty and overbearing in his deportment towards others. And these are the characters of which our Lord declares that they are *blessed* ; those are happy who possess them, even though perhaps little understood, little approved, even wondered at by the world around them.

The poor in spirit are blessed, *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. They are willing to seek it on the terms in which it is offered, " repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." They thankfully receive the atonement which He has made, feeling in themselves that they are burthened with a weight of debt, and have nothing wherewith to pay. The gospel is glad tidings to them. If its words were, " He that is without sin amongst you," let him enter into the kingdom of heaven ; it would be no glad tidings, for they " have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." But it brings a message of great joy to them, when it declares, " that if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and He is the propitiation for our sins." And to this frame of mind is the promise given : " Whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased ; but he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted."¹ These humble themselves,

¹ Matt. xxiii. 12.

for they are *poor in spirit*; and they are exalted: *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*.

So likewise they are *blessed who mourn*: mourn over the transgressions which have separated between them and their God; mourn over the sinful nature from which their transgressions sprung: whose thoughts are those of the Prodigal, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." They are *blessed* with that consolation which David desired and enjoyed, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." For the Father against whom he has offended, has sent^a a message of reconciliation: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,^b not imputing their trespasses" to those who repent and turn to Him. Those, therefore, who *mourn* with that "godly sorrow which leadeth unto repentance," are comforted in the assurance, that "Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring unto God"^c those who were otherwise "alienated from Him by wicked works:" they are cheered when they learn that "God is faithful to forgive their sins, and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness."^d This is the comfort which the penitent need, and this is the comfort which the gospel brings, and therefore the Lord says, *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted*.

Justly, however, did our Lord say to his disciples concerning the blessings of the gospel, "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." It would seem strange to the lovers of this world, to speak of *the poor in spirit* or *the mourner* as *blessed*. It would seem no less strange to speak of *the meek* as *inheriting the earth*: for in a world of which the general character is, that "all seek their own," it might be thought that meekness is more likely to lose than to gain: to miss its share rather

^a Ps. xxxii. 1.

^b 2 Cor. v. 19.

^c 1 Pet. iii. 18.

^d 1 John i. 9.

- than obtain the inheritance. Meekness, however, is often found in fact to "have the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come:" to receive what selfishness, rapacity, or arrogance fails to secure.

But our Lord, in this promise, speaks not of the earth below, but of the heaven above; here signified by the land of Canaan, the inheritance of the chosen people of God on earth, and typical of the heavenly inheritance prepared for them. *This the meek shall inherit*: for they have learnt of Him, who was "meek and lowly in heart:" they have followed his steps, who "when He was reviled, reviled not again;" they have "the mind that was in Christ Jesus, doing nothing through strife and vain glory:" and knowing their own unworthiness, they "submit themselves one to another in the fear of God," and "in lowliness of mind reckon others better than themselves."

These then are the three first characters which the Saviour declares *blessed*—the HUMBLE, the PENITENT, the MEEK. How does our mind conform to his mind in this judgment? That will depend upon the degree in which we have formed our opinion by the light of Scripture. In proportion as we are imbued with the spirit which is learnt there, we shall perceive that lowliness, self-abasement, and humility are the proper feelings for hearts like ours: and shall pray that with them, as the raiment best becoming our low condition, we may be more and more completely clothed.

LECTURE II.

BLESSINGS OF THE PURSUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

MATT. v. 6.

1. "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."

Who are they on whom this blessing is pronounced?
For the word righteousness, in Scripture, has more than

one signification. It signifies the state of one who is justified in the sight of God. And it also signifies that holy, just, and sober course of life, which God prescribes.

Our Lord's blessing applies to both these meanings. To be at peace with God, must be the basis of all real happiness; for surely there can be none without it. And in order to be at peace with God, there must be an endeavour to walk in the way which He commands and approves. Therefore, *blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness*: whose principal desire and aim it is to acquire that state of heart, and maintain that course of life, which is accepted of God.

Our Lord looks out into the world, and sees that this is not the blessing which men are commonly hungering and thirsting for. It might have been hoped of some who too soon showed the contrary. It might have been hoped of that rich young man who came to our Lord, asking him, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" But he quickly proved that the things of this world had more attraction for him. For when Jesus showed him the way of righteousness, he "went away sorrowing." It might have been hoped concerning Herod: for he "often sent for John the Baptist, and heard him gladly." But he also soon showed that the will of Herodias and the favour of those who sat at meat with him weighed more in his mind than righteousness. The same might have been thought concerning many who followed the Lord Jesus, and saw his works and heard his words. But the contrary was seen, when, though they "believed in Jesus, they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue."

The Lord knew how quickly the things which they did hunger and thirst after, would pass away. Nothing would remain to the owner of "many possessions:" who can take none of them away when he dieth, neither

¹ Mark x. 17.

² Ib. vi. 20.

³ John xii. 42.

doth his pomp follow him. Nothing would remain to Herod, but “a fearful looking for of judgment” which shall condemn the ungodly and the sinner. Nothing shall remain to the seekers of this world’s favour, who “love the praise of men more than the praise of God.” “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever.”^a

This is one reason why the lovers of righteousness are blessed: they have chosen that good part which shall not be taken from them. But there is another. *They shall be filled.* They, and they alone, have this promise. The lovers of wealth, of honour, of pleasure—the lovers of this world in any of its various forms—are never *filled*; never so satisfied with what they have as not to covet more, even if they are not disappointed altogether. Of these we might justly pronounce, Unhappy are they; for they shall not be *filled*. But they whose first desire is righteousness, are not “sent empty away.” The promise is made to them: “They shall find the Lord their God, if they seek him with all their heart, and with all their soul.”^b

And the time was now come, when this blessing should be enjoyed. Suppose the case of one in that day, who was eagerly thirsting for the first condition of righteousness, peace with God:—inquiring, in the words of the prophet Micah, “Wherewith shall I appear before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?”^c Saying within himself, God indeed “hath showed me what is good,” and what He “requires of me:” to “do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with Him.” But if He were to “enter into judgment with me,” could I “answer Him to one of a thousand?” “For what man is he that liveth, and sinneth not?”

To one thus inquiring, and thus fearing, and thus seeking after a righteousness which he has not, is the invitation given, “Come unto me, all ye that labour

^a 1 John ii. 17.^b Deut. iv. 29.^c Micah vi. 6—8.

and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”⁷ He hears the offer, made by one who cannot disappoint or fail ; an offer confirmed by the gracious assurance that “ the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all ; ”⁸ an offer grounded upon that “ full, and perfect, and sufficient sacrifice ” made for the sins of all men :⁹ and thus his desire is *filled*, his need is satisfied ; and he experiences a “ joy and peace ” which nothing else can give to sinful man, when conscious of his sinfulness.

It is easy to suppose the case of another, hungering after that “ righteousness and true holiness ” which he knows must belong to all God’s children, yet finding “ a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, so that when he would do good, evil is present with him.”¹⁰ Suppose him to exclaim in the spirit of the apostle Paul, “ Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ” The same invitation meets and comforts him : “ Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and ye shall find rest unto your souls : ” rest, not merely from the guilt and condemnation, but from the power and dominion of sin. For “ for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil : ”¹¹ and that they who are contending against the malice of that adversary, may have one through whom they may be “ more than conquerors : ” made able to “ do all things ” through his Spirit which dwelleth in them.

Therefore the Lord declares, *Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness*. “ The kingdom of heaven is at hand : ” and *they shall be filled* with all that they desire.

But it is not for the present world that the desire of righteousness is excited ; neither is it in the present world that it can be completely satisfied. Here there is much to disturb it both within and without the man. The corruption that is in the world, makes our life on

⁷ Matt. xi. 28.

⁸ Is. liiii. 6.

⁹ See Heb. xv. 12—14.

¹⁰ Rom. vii. 21—25.

¹¹ John iii. 8.

earth a warfare, even to the end : a warfare, indeed, of which the success is secure, as long as the exertion is sincere and earnest : but warfare is not rest, nor can imperfection satisfy one who is striving after perfection. Therefore our Lord pronounces the lovers of righteousness blessed, because their affections are directed towards a state in which their desire shall have its perfect consummation : are preparing them for a world in which "dwelleth righteousness :"⁷ not, as here, for a season, or in a few favoured spots, but where there shall be no more sin. Then shall the lovers of righteousness "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father ;"⁸ and the day-spring which enlightens them shall be never overspread with clouds, never overcome by night, but know no going down.



LECTURE III.

THE BLESSING OF THE MERCIFUL AND THE PURE IN HEART.

MATT. v. 7, 8.

7. "Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy.

8. "Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God."

WHEN the mother of two of the apostles asked of our Lord in their behalf that they might sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom ; He replied, that such a place could only belong to those "for whom it was prepared of the Father."¹ The lowest place in his kingdom, much less the highest, could not be given even to an apostle, if he had not the proper features of the Christian character ; if, for instance, he had not mercy, and if he had not purity. If he had not purity, he could be little fitted for the presence of Him whose name is

² 2 Pet. iii. 13.

⁴ Ch. xiii. 43.

¹ See Ch. xx. 23, &c.

Holy, who cannot look upon evil. If he had not mercy, he could not rightly understand his own condition, his undeservings, or the goodness which had spared him.

To be merciful, is, first, to be kind, tender-hearted, ready to feel for the wants and distresses of others, and, if possible, to relieve them. And this must be the disposition of every man who has a proper sense of the mercy shown towards himself. Without it, he can be no disciple of the Lord Jesus ; who, "when He was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich."²

Therefore *the merciful shall obtain mercy*, because they have this same spirit, "the spirit of Christ." As He himself said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another."³ "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."⁴

The mercy, however, required by the Gospel, proceeds farther. It is to be forgiving, "if a man have a quarrel against any:" to cultivate sentiments the most opposite to those then prevailing in Judea : and instead of hating an enemy, whilst a friend was to be loved,⁵ to do good to them that hate us ; to pray for the persecutor and the slanderer : as expressed by St. Paul, and enforced by the proper sanction ; "Let all bitterness, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice ; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."⁶

It is this thought, that he hopes through Christ to be forgiven, which makes the Christian ready to forgive. If a man be severe towards a fellow-creature on account of a trifling debt which he has against him, how can he expect his heavenly Father to excuse

² Cor. viii. 9.

³ John xiii. 35.

⁴ Ib. xv. 13, 14.

⁵ See v. 43.

⁶ Eph. iv. 31.

him the "ten thousand talents" which he would be found to owe, if God were to reckon with him, and enter into judgment with him? As our Lord himself explained his precept, "Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me; shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?"⁷

So that the unmerciful are disqualified for the favour of God: and the *merciful obtain mercy*, not merely as a reward for self-denial, and restraint of evil passions, but because they have been brought, through the power of the Holy Ghost, to that state of mind which indicates a right reception of the gospel. "Even as Christ forgave them, so also do they."⁸

And if the quality of mercy is essential to show that a man has drunk of the waters of life, so is purity of heart essential to his admission into the kingdom of heaven. *The pure in heart shall see God.* It follows, the impure shall not see Him; shall be "shut out for ever from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." "For this is the will of God, even our sanctification." This is his will in our redemption, in our calling, our baptism, our profession, that his peculiar people should be cleared from all defilement of flesh and spirit, and bring every thought into conformity with the obedience of Christ. In that great and eternal city represented in a vision to St. John, "descending out of heaven from God, and having the glory of God;" there is no inheritance for the impure and sensual. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth."⁹ "Lord, who shall enter into thy tabernacle, or who shall ascend into thy holy hill? Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart."¹ Even they "that crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts," and "through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body."⁴

⁷ Ch. xviii. 23—35.

⁸ Col. iii. 13.

⁹ Rev. xxi. 10, &c.

¹ Ps. xxiv. 3.

⁴ Rom. viii. 13.

Those who strive to attain this purity, have a difficult warfare to maintain. They are forced to "keep under their body, and bring it into subjection," that the flesh may be subdued to the spirit, and sin gain no dominion over them. But this they submit to, "purifying their hearts by faith;"—faith bringing the future before their minds with so much clearness as to enable them to look beyond the present world, and live for that which is to come. For the promise is, they *shall see God*. It is not a promise altogether reserved for another world: for even here God refreshes them with his presence, and encourages them by a consciousness of his favour. But they still look forward to the time, when the promise shall be literally performed: when a new heaven and a new earth shall be opened to them, for "the first heaven and the first earth shall pass away." And a voice shall be heard from heaven, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."⁴

LECTURE IV.

THE PEACEMAKER.

MATT. v. 9.

9. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

WHEN our Lord said, "I am not come to send peace upon earth, but a sword,"¹ He spoke not of the purpose of the gospel, but of its abuse: He spoke of its effect by means of men's evil passions. But its purpose is peace: and when it is rightly received and practised, its effect will be peace in the individual heart, and peace among mankind. A blessing is here

² Rev. xxi. 1.

⁴ Rev. xxi. 3.

¹ See Ch. x. 34.

pronounced on those who promote this ; not only, like the meek, bear injuries with patience, or like the merciful, forgive them, but are active in healing disputes and preventing quarrels. To hinder evil, is to do good. Quarrels generate much evil : anger, malice, hatred, spring from them : so that whoever prevents or reconciles disagreements, does good by restraining evil.

To be a *peacemaker*, a man must be candid and discreet ; ready with that "soft answer which turneth away wrath."² Disputes commonly proceed from the unlicensed, unbridled use of the tongue. "A froward man soweth strife ; and a whisperer separateth chief friends."³ Things are said by one which had better not be said : and repeated by another, which ought not to be repeated. To restrain this license, is to be a peacemaker. "He that covereth a transgression, seeketh love ; but he that repeateth a matter, separateth very friends."⁴ "A tale-bearer revealeth secrets ; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter."⁵ Many stories which disturb peace have no foundation. Many things that are not untrue, may yet be properly left untold : charity will rather hide than circulate them. The fire which is let alone, will smoulder and be extinguished ; but when stirred, it bursts into a blaze. Many things, too, which appear unwarrantable, may be explained when the circumstances belonging to them are known. The peacemaker keeps this in view, and by that "word in season," which is "good," restrains those who are brethren, those who ought to preserve that union which springs from a common faith and mutual responsibility, from doing wrong to one another.

2. Further : to be a *peacemaker*, a man must be a peace-keeper : and for that purpose he must sometimes consent to restrain his own feelings, and disregard his own interests. If there is to be concord, there must

² *Prov.* xv. 1.

³ *Ib.* xvi. 28.

⁴ *Ib.* xvii. 9.

⁵ *Ib.* xi. 13.

be forbearance : if there is to be good will, there must be gentleness and lovingkindness : if there is to be reconciliation, there must be concession. "A wrathful man stirreth up strife ; but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife."⁶ The axe must be laid to the root of the tree. St. Paul says, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory ; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves."⁷ Thus he prepares the ground for peace, and sows the seeds of peace ; but peace can never flourish upon the soil of pride, or grow from the stock of selfishness ; neither can strife be lopped off, like an unprofitable branch, whilst the root remains unsound. The apostle asked of the Lord Jesus, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him ? Until seven times ? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but until seventy times seven."⁸ This required of himself restraint and forbearance : obliged him to keep his angry passions in subjection. Abraham was a successful peacemaker, when he put an end to the strife which had arisen between his own herdsmen, and the servants of his nephew Lot.⁹ But he would not have avoided contention, if he had not been ready to make a sacrifice : if he had asserted his own rights to the full, and shown no disposition to concede. He left to the younger what the elder might have claimed ; and gave up to Lot the well watered plains of Jordan, content to take for himself the right hand or the left, according as his nephew might be desirous. St. Paul too was a peacemaker between Philemon and the slave who had deserted him. And he also was prepared to make a sacrifice, writing to Philemon, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account ; I, Paul, have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it."¹

And therefore are *the peacemakers called the children*

⁶ Prov. xv. 18.

⁷ Phil. ii. 3.

⁸ Ch. xviii. 21, &c.

⁹ Gen. xiii. 1—11.

¹ Philemon xviii. 19.

of God, because they have this spirit, this disposition of love and forbearance which He implants in his children, and in which they bear the likeness of their heavenly Father. For He himself is the great peacemaker. When all mankind were at enmity with Him, alienated from Him in their minds and practices, He found a way of reconciliation; and the first announcement of the gospel was "peace on earth, good will towards men."² And when "He spared not his own Son, but gave Him up for us all," He showed an example of the spirit of the true peacemaker: He showed what those must be, who desire to be "followers of God, as dear children." And *blessed are the peacemakers*, because they are his children; born "after his image;" and therefore are not children only, "but heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ:"³ a place is prepared for them in that everlasting kingdom, where all is peace, and all is love; and where the wonder will be, that the trifles which now agitate the heart, and are thought sufficient to disturb the quiet of a neighbourhood, or the comfort of a family, could possess the power of distracting souls which are born for eternity. Moses said to his countrymen, as they strove together, "Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one towards another?"⁴ And so we might say to all angry and contentious spirits: "Sirs, ye are immortal beings; why dispute ye about the perishing concerns of this transitory world?" "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and all lesser things will vanish before that great object, as the mists of night disappear at the rising of the sun.

² Luke ii. 14.³ Rom. viii. 17.⁴ Acts vii. 26.

LECTURE V.

PERSECUTION FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE.

MATT. v. 10—12.

10. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

WHEN the patriarch Joseph was falsely accused and cast into prison, because he refused to be "partaker of another's sin," he was *persecuted for righteousness' sake*.¹ So was Micaiah, at the court of king Ahab, when he refused to "declare good unto the king, but what the Lord said unto him, that would he speak."² "And the king said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; and say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come again in peace." There are other persecutions for righteousness' sake which the people of God have always been called to bear, and arising out of the same causes;—the reproach, the scorn, the enmity of those who live on different principles. For as "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and these are contrary one to the other;" so they who "live after the flesh," are contrary to those who are "led by the Spirit, and they do not agree together."³ Our Lord has shown the reason, when he said to his brethren, at that time not believing in Him: "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil."⁴ So Joseph testified, when he revolted from wickedness: so Micaiah testified, when he foretold Ahab's ruin: so the just man testifies, when he shuns dishonesty and fraud: so the godly man testifies,

¹ Gen. xxxix. 20.² 1 Kings xxii. 13—28.³ See Gal. iv. 29.⁴ John vii. 7.

when he walks in the fear of the Lord : so the temperate man testifies, when he restrains his appetites, and "keeps his body in subjection." And against such witnesses for righteousness, a feeling often rises from those of a contrary part like that which Ahab avowed against Micaiah, "I hate him, because he prophesies not good concerning me, but evil."

Whatever the sentiments of men towards such may be, they are assured of the favour of God. *Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* For the sake of this, they resign what is gratifying to our nature, the good word and the good will of others : they show a proof of faith which God will not leave unnoticed or unrecompensed, and they love the praise of God more than the praise of men : and his praise will be theirs, when the favour of all the world besides will be of no avail.

This consolation the Lord has bequeathed to his disciples of every age : for it will be needed in every age. They who "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," will always find much in the world to discourage and oppose them.

But his apostles and followers in that day, required a still fuller assurance and a brighter hope ; for they would have much more to encounter, and much more to undergo. And to them He says,

11. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
12. "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in heaven : for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

It was thus that in former days the servants of God had been treated. As the parable represents it,⁵ "The husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another." And so he himself was dealt with ; and warned them, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have

⁵ Ch. xxi. 35.

called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" By all this they were not to be deterred. "Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell."⁷

But farther, instead of fearing, or being deterred, they were to *rejoice, and be exceeding glad*: for as their trial, so would be their reward. They should belong to that company described in the book of Revelation; concerning whom it was asked, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? These are they which came out of great tribulation; and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in his temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."⁸

Having this encouragement, the apostles went forth "as lambs amongst wolves," and pursued their course with joy, maintaining the faith required of them. When brought before the chief priests and elders, and beaten, and forbidden to "speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus," they "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."⁹ When Paul and Silas had been cruelly scourged by order of the magistrates at Philippi, and thrust into the inner prison, instead of lamenting their hard fate, or complaining of the cause which had brought them to such trials, "at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them."¹⁰ They "thought it not strange" that they were tried with this fiery trial; "but rejoiced, inasmuch as they were partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory should be revealed, they might be glad also with exceeding joy."¹¹

⁶ Ch. x. 24, 25.

⁷ Ib. 28.

⁸ Rev. vii. 13.

⁹ Acts v. 40, 41.

¹⁰ Acts xvi. 25.

¹¹ 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13.

This it is, to be guided by the Christian's motto, and to "walk by faith, and not by sight :"³ to look on all events which come upon us in the way of duty, not as they are profitable or unprofitable now, not as they are agreeable or disagreeable to flesh and blood, not as they affect our present interests or comforts, but as they bear upon eternity : as they will appear in the light of that day, when whosoever has confessed the Son of God "before men, him will He confess also before his Father which is in heaven."⁴ "What shall it profit a man," to have possessed all the happiness which this world can give him, if in the end it leads to everlasting misery? What shall it disturb a man, though he lose all which in this world is gratifying, if the end is "fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore?"

The Lord saw this clearly, which we see only "through a glass, darkly:" and therefore He said to those who for his sake were about to suffer reproach, persecution, a life of hardships, and often a death of torment ;—*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in heaven.* The "light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."⁵

LECTURE VI.

THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST AN EXAMPLE TO THE WORLD.

MATT. v. 13—16.

13. "Ye are the salt of the earth : but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."

THOSE who on this occasion were immediately around the Lord, were his disciples. The multitude who

³ 2 Cor. v. 7

⁴ Ch. x. 32.

⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

heard him might become so; but of his disciples he says, *Ye are the salt of the earth*. In every country, salt is necessary to man. But in the climate of Judea, the products of the earth would be useless without it. And as salt gives to these their value, and makes them salutary and profitable; so must his disciples be to the inhabitants of the world. They must mix with them, and season them with their own faith and with the habits springing from it, and so keep them from corruption.

The Jewish people should have been this *salt* to the nations of the earth. For this purpose, God had chosen them. "Behold," He says, "I have formed this people for myself, that they may show forth my praise."¹ To a certain degree they did so. In the midst of a world that knew not God, they maintained the record of Him, who "in the beginning created the heaven and the earth."

But through their faithlessness and wickedness, *the salt had lost its savour*. St. Paul rebukes them, saying, "Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you," whereas, it ought to have been glorified. *Wherewith*, then, shall the earth *be salted*; how shall it be purified from corruption;—if they who are to preserve it have no virtue remaining in them? Such salt is only fit to be *cast out* as worthless, and *to be trodden under foot of men*: deserves no better treatment, than is impending over the degenerate inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah.

Another example follows, equally suited to raise the minds of the disciples, by showing them the place they were to occupy, and the duty which devolved on them.

14. "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid."

¹ Isa. xliii. 21.

² Rom. ii. 21—24.

Properly speaking, there is but one *light of the world*, the Lord himself, "the sun of righteousness." They were not that light, but they were to hold up that light, and so draw others to it, that they also might be delivered out of darkness.

Or they might be compared to a *city set on an hill, which cannot be hid*; distinctly visible, so that all belonging to it is known. If the sun shines brightly upon it, it is seen from afar: if it is overhung with clouds, men miss the object to which they have been accustomed, and a traveller can no longer use it to direct his course. So with those who profess to be disciples of Christ. *They cannot be hid*. If by their good example they do not show forth the praise of Him who called them, they become a dishonour and reproach to the name they bear. For they are set up as a light which men should walk by; this was the purpose of their calling.

15. "Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

A light is kindled, not that it may be concealed under a bed,^s or covered by a hollow vessel, but that it may furnish useful light to those who have work to do which without it they could not perform. This is an example of that light which was now come into the world, that as many as should look up to it "might not abide in darkness." The apostles were to hold forth that light both in their doctrine and in their practice: and their disciples were to do the same to the end of time; that "God might be glorified through Jesus Christ" by a faithful and obedient people, "redeemed from all iniquity, and zealous of good works."^t The light of such a people shines before *men*, and directs them in the course which they themselves should choose and follow.

^s As in the parallel passage, Mark iv. 21.

^t Tit. ii. 14.

Zaccheus, for example, held up a light before his brother publicans, when he openly avowed his repentance, and declared his future resolutions.⁵ "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken anything from any one by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." St. Paul speaks of the Thessalonian Christians as setting the same example to all the neighbouring countries; when "they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven," so that "in every place their faith to Godward was spread abroad," superseding, as it were, the need of the apostle's preaching.⁶ St. Peter, in like manner, expects that by the light of her good example, the believing wife may convey the truth to her unbelieving husband, whilst he "beholds her chaste conversation," and learns by what power it is guided and maintained.⁷

Thus the consistent Christian becomes as *salt* or as *light* to the world in which he lives. Were it not for the light which he exhibits, "darkness would cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." Whereas his benevolence relieves; his meekness tranquillises; his purity chastens; his zeal awakens; his piety edifies; his prayers draw down a blessing. And the Author of all, "the God and Father of lights," is glorified in his faithful servant.

Indeed, every one in his own station, whether knowingly or unknowingly, is a light to others: either a light which misleads, or a light which instructs. Either for good or for evil, **EXAMPLE** is the guide which a multitude will follow. In the sad account which many will have to render at the great day, the wickedness which by their own bad conduct they have caused in others will be added to the wickedness which they themselves have practised. Whilst they who walking

⁵ Luke xix. 8.

⁶ "So that we need not to speak anything." See 1 Thess. i. 7—10.

⁷ 1 Pet. iii. 2.

in the world by faith, not "after the flesh, but after the Spirit," have been kept from the evil with which the world abounds, and by their integrity, charity, moderation, purity of life, prove themselves obedient disciples of their Lord,—these lead others in the way of righteousness, whilst they "work out their own salvation." And the Lord's words are made good and illustrated; *Men see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven.*

LECTURE VII.

THE EXTENT OF CHRISTIAN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

MATT. v. 17—20.

17. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.
18. "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle¹ shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.
19. "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

JESUS had been now long enough engaged in teaching, that reports concerning Him should be spread abroad; and, doubtless, many things were stated, partly true and partly false. Among them, perhaps, some might affirm that He was come to set aside *the law*; to introduce a new doctrine which should contradict Moses and the prophets. As was alleged against Stephen afterwards: "This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law."² The Lord calls attention to the fact, that He was *not come to destroy, but to fulfil*. The prophecies

¹ Alluding probably to the little strokes or dashes by which the difference was made, in Hebrew and Syriac writings, between letters almost alike.—*Lightfoot*.

² Acts vi. 13.

centered in Him: and He did not yield up his spirit as man, till He had accomplished all things which were written concerning Him.³ From the ceremonial law *not one jot or tittle passed*, till it had fulfilled its purpose: and from the moral law, prescribing the duty of man, *not one jot or one tittle shall ever pass, till heaven and earth pass*: as long as the world itself endures. It is the law which God has from the first ordained, that men should walk in it. And so far from the kingdom of Christ being established in opposition to these commandments, whoever taught and practised them most perfectly should be *called greatest in that kingdom*: and he should be *called least in the kingdom of heaven*, not reckoned worthy of a place in it, who by false teaching or bad example encouraged men to break *one of the least of them*. This the Scribes and Pharisees had done, "making the word of God of none effect through their traditions." Yet they were looked up to, as the strictest teachers: and those who heard our Lord's words would be surprised to learn that his disciples must have a different and a better righteousness than theirs.

20. "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Here something is proposed to the Christian, which may lead him to a useful train of self-inquiry. Our *righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*; must be of a better and purer nature. Let us think, then, what theirs was; in what it fell short; in what it was mistaken.

The Pharisees were very strict in observing the exact letter of *the law*. They kept the sabbath, for instance, most rigorously. When our Lord's disciples plucked some ears of corn and rubbed them out on that day, they inquired, "Why do your disciples that

³ John ix. 28.

which is not lawful on the sabbath day?"⁴ When the sick and diseased, naturally fearful of losing an opportunity, were brought by their friends on the sabbath to seek cures from our Lord, "the ruler of the synagogue said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day."⁵

Further, they assumed a great appearance of holiness. They "fasted often:" they prayed constantly; even in public, "In the midst of the synagogues, and standing at the corners of the streets." They showed so much reverence for the Scriptures, that sentences from them were embroidered upon their garments, or worn upon their foreheads.⁶ They are said never to have passed a day without reading through the decalogue. They were so scrupulous in outward ceremonies, as never to sit down to meat with unwashed hands.⁷ They were so strict in giving God his due, as to bring to the sacred treasury the tithes even of the meanest herbs of the garden.⁸

Such was their righteousness. And let us not suppose that for this righteousness they were blamed. Rather let those take warning who have not even this outward righteousness. They could not be blamed for the strict observance of the sabbath; for this had been positively required by Moses: and God has uniformly declared his approbation of those who keep the sabbath holy. They could not be blamed for their fasting: for it is a good thing to "bring the body into subjection." Still less could they be blamed for their prayers; for prayer is the chain which connects man with God, and earth with heaven. Neither could they be blamed for the exactness with which they paid whatever the law required; indeed our Lord tells them, "This ought ye to have done."⁹

What then, we are ready to ask, what was want-

⁴ Luke vi. 1.

⁷ *Ib.* xv. 1.

⁵ Luke xiii. 14.

⁸ *Ib.* xxiii. 23.

⁶ See Ch. xxiii. v.

⁹ Luke xi. 42.

ing to their righteousness? *That* was wanting, on which the whole of religion depends. The heart: the heart converted to God; the right spirit. What they did, was directed by no love of God, no desire of pleasing Him, no zeal for his service or glory. It was done in hypocrisy, springing from self-love: done from a desire to be thought highly of among men, to procure to themselves the honour of superior sanctity. "They disfigured their faces, that they might appear unto men to fast." They "sounded a trumpet before them" when they gave their alms; took care that it should be generally known. They "for a pretence made long prayers."¹

Such is the reason, why the righteousness of those who are really the servants of God, must "*exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.*" It must be dictated by the love of God.

But a further lesson is to be derived from this instructive passage. What shall we think of those who have not even this insufficient and unsatisfactory righteousness? The Pharisees were condemned, because they observed the sabbath for form's sake alone. What will become of those who do not at all "remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy"? The Pharisees were condemned, because they fasted, not to subdue the flesh and mortify the deeds of the body, but to be admired of men. What will become of those who never deny themselves anything, and think it no duty to restrain their appetites? The Pharisees were condemned, because for a show they made long prayers. What will be the end of those who never pray at all?

The heart is so deceitful, that it needs to be constantly proved and examined, even in regard to the services and exercises of religion. What carries us to them? A desire to make a decent appearance in the sight of men? A desire to quiet conscience by a compliance with the outward form of duty? Or a

¹ Ch. vi. 2—16.

desire, inwardly and seriously felt, to praise God, to pray to God, to hear his word, and learn better how to serve Him? That is the only spirit which proves the heart to be really right with God. No mere form of righteousness will avail with Him who "trieth the very heart and reins." No lip-service will satisfy Him who complained of his people of old, "These people honour me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me."² Search and prove yourselves: or rather pray with David, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me," and "see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

LECTURE VIII.

THE DANGER OF INDULGING ANGER.

MATT. v. 21—26.

21. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:
 22. "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca,¹ shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire."

THE disciples had been before told, "Your righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees." Our Lord proceeds to instance several particulars. For instance, the commandment said, *Thou shalt not kill*. And this commandment they enforced. *Whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment*. Of the heinousness of such a crime there was no doubt; it had been forbidden from the

² Ezek. xxix. 13.

¹ Raca, a Hebrew word, probably a common term of reproach, representing an empty, worthless person.

first by the law of God. But it was overlooked by the expounders of that law, that the guilt consists not only in the last and worst act, but in all the steps which lead to it, or in the state of mind which is disposed to it, even though the actual crime may never be committed. The Lord corrects their defective teaching. *I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.* And still worse, if he breaks out into reproachful language, such as tends to inflame passion, and provoke to malice and revenge. These things bring the soul to destruction and perdition. *Anger without a cause*, violent and insulting words,—are often the approaches to murder, and always signs of a state of heart most reprehensible in the sight of God. We read in Genesis,* that “the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.” At that moment there was in Cain’s heart the same spirit which soon afterwards burst out, when “they were in the field, and Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.” Had any outward hinderance checked his hand, the jealous, envious, malicious heart would have equally condemned him; and it is vain to apply restraint to the one, without correcting the other. There are degrees, no doubt, in the sinfulness of the angry passions; so our Lord implies in his allusion to the Jewish courts of law, *the council* being more serious than *the judgment*: but no degree of enmity is to be cherished or allowed.

23. “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee;

24. “Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

25. “Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way

* Gen. iv. 5.

with him ; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

26. " Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

The only way of subduing the evil passions of envy, hatred, and malice, is to repress every hostile feeling in the first bud. Even acts of religious duty, however needful, are not so urgent as this ; and till this is done, are displeasing rather than acceptable to God. It was an act of duty to *bring a gift to the altar* ; Moses had commanded,^s " Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose ; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles : and they shall not appear before the Lord empty ; every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee." This, then, was an appointed, acknowledged duty. But ill-will rankling at the heart would corrupt all : " for if a man love not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ?" How can he entertain that humble, lowly spirit which befits a sinner in the presence of his judge, a creature in the worship of his Creator, while towards his brethren on earth he cherishes a malicious, unrelenting disposition ?

What then is to be done ? Must the feeling remain, and excuse the neglect of God ? as is sometimes implied in the reasons which men plead for absenting themselves from the church, or from the Lord's table ? The way of duty is very different. *First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* But be reconciled without delay ; common worldly prudence requires us to *agree with an adversary quickly* ; we know the consequences which follow obstinate and persevering hostility even in this world ; it often involves men in difficulties from which they endeavour to

^s Deut. xvi. 16.

extricate themselves in vain. How much more serious is delay, when every day, during which men cherish an unforgiving temper, increases their condemnation before God? If thou fallest within the verge of his wrath, how shalt thou escape? Thou hast nothing at all to pay, and yet *the uttermost farthing* shall be required. Even when man is our adversary, prudence warns us to seek a timely reconciliation. But it is far more dreadful to remain with God for our adversary: who commands us to "follow peace with all men;"⁴ to "put off anger, wrath, malice:" and to put on "kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering: forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."⁵ "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."⁶

LECTURE IX.

THE DANGER OF INDULGING EVIL THOUGHTS.

MATT. v. 27—30.

27. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery.
 28. "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

ANOTHER instance is here brought before us, in which our Lord shows the defect of all teaching which does not reach the root of the evil. The sin forbidden here, is the unlawful indulgence of the passions. But the seat of this, as of all sin, is in the heart. "From within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts,

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 18.

⁵ Col. iii. 8—13.

⁶ Ch. vi. 14, 15.

adulteries, fornications.”¹ Little good, therefore, is done by merely restraining the outward action, while the desire or passion remains. Whoever would preserve his house from fire, must quench the embers before they burst into a flame. Whoever would stop a flowing stream, must trace it to its source, and exhaust the fountain from which it runs. An evil thought is the spark which kindles the raging fire. An impure desire is the source from which the torrent flows, which when once it fills the heart can hardly be restrained. There, therefore, must the check be given. We must control our desires; we “must make a covenant with our eyes;” we must abstain from all incentives to sin; we must avoid all such company as might ensnare us into it; all such places as might furnish a temptation to it. The process may be a painful process, and human nature may rebel; but it is needful, and must be consented to, at whatever sacrifice; even though the sin may be as dear to us as a limb is valuable to the body, even though the renouncing it may be like the destruction of a right eye or a right arm. For this is the example set before us in what follows.

29. “And if thy right eye offend thee, [become the cause of thy offending,] pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

30. “And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”

Here the case is supposed, that a sin may have been so long indulged, as to be a sort of second nature; a habit so long practised, as to have become a part of a man’s self: a companion may have been so long cherished, that to separate from him is like the parting with a limb: an evil course may be the means of so much gain, that the loss of it would be a serious privation. Our Lord does not for this reason spare

¹ Mark vii, 21.

the sin, or the cause of sin ; on the contrary, He affirms that *it is profitable* for a man to renounce it, rather than retain it ; for that there is no alternative between the renouncing it, and that "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," revealed against every man "that doeth evil." So a physician does not deny the value of a limb or the pain of losing it ; but he still says, *it is profitable for thee* to consent to the privation, for life can be preserved on no other terms.

It was thus that John the Baptist reasoned with Herod, and authoritatively said, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."² Herod, we are told, "feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and a holy, and observed him : and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." There seemed, then, some hope that he might be brought to repentance ; and John urged him to the first step towards repentance ; the putting away one whom he ought never to have taken. It might be like the cutting off a member from the body ; but still it would be profitable ; for if he did not cut it off and cast it from him, he could not escape the everlasting destruction of hell. "On account of these things the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience."³ It would be profitable for him, even with the loss of all that in this world was dearest, to be walking in the way of life eternal, rather than with the possession of every earthly enjoyment to have no hope in death "but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation," which shall destroy the ungodly and the sinner. So the Ephesians judged. Herod heard the truth, but in vain ; they heard it, and acted on it ; for we are told concerning them, that "many of them that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds : many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men : and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver."

² Mark vi. 14—20.

³ Eph. v. 6.

⁴ Acts xix. 18—20.

This is an example of the *plucking out the eye*, the *cutting off the hand*. These curious or magic arts were like a hand or an eye to the Ephesian converts. They were their living. But it was *profitable for them to enter into life halt and maimed*, to enjoy the favour of God though with the loss of earthly goods and gain, rather than after having enjoyed the advantages which this world could give them, to be cast out "for ever from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power." *It is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

With these awful words before their eyes, will any dare to plead the strength of habit, or the force of temptation, or the power of example, as an excuse for continuance in known and open sin? The words of our Lord "set before us life and good, and death and evil:" and exhort us to "choose life," to "mortify the deeds of the body," that "we may live." Corrupt nature will put forth many pleas; and these pleas might be listened to, if the danger were less urgent, or the risk less terrible. But there can be no hesitation. We must consent to amputation, or expect death. The wages of allowed sin is death, eternal death. "The righteous shall go into life eternal." "The pure in heart shall see God." "The merciful shall obtain mercy." But for the adulterer, the reveller, the revengeful, the covetous, "there is no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."⁶

⁵ See Deut. xxx. 15—20.

⁶ Gal. v. 21.



LECTURE X.

DIVORCEMENT—SOLEMNITY OF OATHS.

MATT. v. 31—37.

31. "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement :¹
 32. "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery ; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

ANOTHER case is here specified, in which the allowed practice of the Jewish nation was either a perversion of their law, or altogether contrary to it. Moses had permitted marriage, under certain circumstances, to be dissolved : "suffered a man to write a bill of divorcement, and put a wife away." In consequence, divorces on the most frivolous pretences had now become disgracefully frequent. Our Lord corrects this evil by bringing things back to the original regulation ; for "in the beginning it was not so." "For from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female :"² and ordained that "a man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and they twain should be one flesh." Moses had relaxed this law, "for the hardness of their hearts." There had been reasons connected with the Jewish people which made it fit to do so. The Son of God had now appeared to restore that which had been lost, and to rebuild that which was decayed ; to bring in all righteousness. And He uses the authority which He possessed—He, to whom all things were delivered of the Father—to restrain the liberty which Moses had allowed, and to re-establish the sanctity of marriage, as ordained of God in the time of man's innocence. That innocence, indeed, remained no longer, and it

¹ Deut. xxiv. 1—4.

² See Mark x. 4—8.

was needful to provide against sin : against the possible case of unfaithfulness. *Saving this cause*, there can be no lawful grounds of separation between those whom "God hath joined together."

33. "Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths :
34. "But I say unto you, Swear not at all : neither by heaven ; for it is God's throne :
35. "Nor by the earth ; for it is his footstool : neither by Jerusalem ; for it is the city of the great king.
36. "Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.
37. "But let your communication be, Yea, yea ; Nay, nay : for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

These words expose another error of the Scribes, who explained away the third commandment, confining it to the letter and neglecting the spirit. They maintained, that as long as the name of God was not actually introduced, the commandment was not broken, provided a man kept clear of perjury. Thus perverting the law, as written in Numbers xxx. 2 : "If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond ; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth."

Christ sweeps away at once all vain subterfuges ; *Swear not at all*. Let your communications be plain and simple, *yea, yea, nay, nay*.

Because of the strictness of these words, one sect of Christians refuses to employ an oath even for the solemn purposes of a court of justice. Such scruples, when sincere, deserve respect ; and certainly we should be able to give good reasons, if we admit a practice which seems contrary to the literal terms of Scripture. There are cases, however, when we are led to do so, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." This appears to be one of such cases.

Because, first, it was allowed, nay commanded by *the law of God himself*, that matters should be solemnly

settled by an oath taken of the parties. As, for instance, we find an ordinance in Exodus xxii. 10, "If a man deliver unto his neighbour an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast, to keep; and it die, or be hurt, or driven away, no man seeing it: then shall an oath of the Lord be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbour's goods; and the owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good."³

Secondly. Because, under the law, we read frequently of oaths being solemnly required and given, by those too who were governed by the especial direction of God; and this practice is nowhere reprov'd, or said to have been followed by the Divine displeasure. Thus Rahab requires of the two spies whom she had concealed in Jericho, "I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house. And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear."⁴ Jehoiada receives from the rulers and officers an oath of fidelity to Joash, the rightful heir to the throne, made more sacred by being taken "in the house of the Lord;"⁵ and Nehemiah in the most solemn manner requires an oath of the nobles and priests, that they would not oppress their brethren returned from Babylon.⁶ "Then I called the priests," (so he relates it,) "and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. And I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise: even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the Lord."

Further, under the Gospel, St. Paul's own example proves that the serious invocation of the name of God is not unlawful. Writing to the Corinthians, he says,

³ See also 1 Kings viii. 31.

⁵ See 2 Kings xi. 4.

⁴ Josh. ii. 12—17.

⁶ Neh. v. 12.

"I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth."⁷ And again, to the Thessalonians, "Neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness."⁸

These examples give reason to believe, that our Lord, when He says, *Swear not at all*; and St. James, when he writes, "Above all, my brethren, swear not:"⁹ are forbidding that light and wanton use of sacred words which was common amongst the Jews, and is too common among all nations. We conclude that, following the spirit of the Scriptures, we are at liberty without scruple of conscience to comply with those laws of our country, which require us, on certain occasions, to ratify our declarations upon oath.

Still it is an evil much to be lamented, when such oaths are rashly multiplied, and mixed up with the concerns of trade and commerce and the transactions of ordinary life. The grounds on which our Lord condemns the mode of swearing which had become habitual among the Jews, show that an appeal to God is only to be made with great solemnity and reverential awe. Let all be on their guard, that they do not acquire habits of expression of the same kind, and introduce sacred words into common discourse, without meaning, perhaps, but, for that very reason, not without profaneness. This cannot be done where the state of mind is safe, because it cannot be done where there is a proper sense of God, and of the soul, and of eternity.

If men obey the Christian precept, "Lie not one to another," a bare affirmative, *yea, yea*, a bare denial, *nay, nay*, would universally satisfy. Any thing beyond this, *cometh of evil*: cometh of the deceit which is in our hearts, and the falsehood which is in our practices, which make men distrustful of one another.

⁷ 2 Cor. i. 23.

⁸ 1 Thess. ii. 5.

⁹ James v. 12.

LECTURE XI.

PATIENCE UNDER INJURIES.

MATT. v. 38—42.

38. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:¹
 39. "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.
 40. "And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.
 41. "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."²

THE law of Moses enacted, that "if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour, as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth." This was appointed, not as private vengeance to the injured persons, but as a legal punishment to the offender. Perhaps, however, it was perverted as if to justify a desire of retaliation. If so, the spirit of the Jewish law condemned it no less than the Christian; for it says, "Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. I am the Lord."³ Again, "Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and He shall save thee."⁴ Our Lord, however, takes the opportunity of showing, that the forgiveness, not the prosecution of injuries, must be the character of his disciples: they must rather yield to evil, than resist it; for "charity beareth all things:" they must rather resign a claim, than urge it to the utmost; for "charity seeketh not her own:"⁵ instead of being sensibly alive to every wrong, and being "overcome of evil," they must "overcome evil with

¹ Lev. xxiv. 19. See also Exod. xxi. 24, 25.

² The officers of public magistrates sometimes did this, pressing into their service the persons whom they met, their horses or carriages, for expedition's sake.

³ Lev. xix. 18.

⁴ Prov. xx. 22.

⁵ 1 Cor. xiii. 5—7.

good.”⁶ Instead of its being a duty, as some suppose, to insist upon their rights, and vindicate themselves against all injustice, the duty is rather to submit and yield. *If a man strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also* : if he assail you with one affront, rather bear a second, than return evil for evil. *If a man sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, rather consent to abide by the loss, and let him have thy cloke also*, than begin a strife of which it is impossible to foresee the end. St. Paul illustrates this, when he reproves the Corinthians for indulging in litigious habits, and so acting in the spirit of the world. “Now, therefore, there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong ? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded ?”⁷

Such is the general rule. Public justice, public duty, and, in many cases, important private interests, must of course make exceptions to the letter of precepts like these. Christ himself appealed to the law, against the injustice with which He was smitten : “One of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so ? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil : but if well, why smitest thou me ?”⁸ And St. Paul thought it not inconsistent with his Christian patience to ask, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned ?”⁹ If by proper means we can prevent another from doing wrong and committing injury, this becomes our duty, as much as it is our duty in other cases to submit to a wrong done. By the ordinance of God himself, when Christians are collected together in a settled community, the magistrate is appointed as a “terror to evil workers :” and “he beareth not the sword in vain ; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”¹

⁶ Rom. xii. 21.

⁷ 1 Cor. vi. 7, 8.

⁸ John xviii. 22.

⁹ Acts xxii. 25.

¹ Rom. xiii. 1—4.

So likewise with respect to another and a different precept which follows.

42. "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away."

This is a general exhortation to a charitable spirit and a liberal practice; but does not supersede discretion or discrimination. Literally followed, it would destroy first the morals, and then the welfare of the whole community. But St. Paul has prescribed the limits within which it should be practised, when he lays down a general maxim, condemning those who would abuse the liberality of their neighbour, that "every man shall eat his own bread;" and that "if any will not work, neither shall he eat."^a The divine ordinance is, that every man should be maintained by his own industry, and not depend upon the industry of others. If in the course of providence, a man's own industry should fail to support him, then the precept comes into operation, *Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.*

Why, then, we might ask, are such strong expressions used, if they are not to be followed in the letter, but in the spirit only?

On the same principle as when a branch is bent strongly in one direction, we bend it as strongly in another, in order that it may be brought into that middle way which we intend it to retain. The natural disposition tends to revenge, to retaliation, to selfishness, to covetousness; and it is to be turned to submission, to forgiveness, to charity, to liberality, by setting before us, in striking instances, the conduct which is agreeable to our heavenly Father. There is little danger of our erring on the side of concession; little danger of our becoming too bountiful, too ready to part with our own for the use of others. It is certain, that expressions strong like these—*resist not*

^a Thess. iii. 10—12.

evil: let thy cloke be taken from thee: yield to those who compel thee unjustly: give to him that asketh thee—expressions like these would not be used, if the danger were not the other way, if our natural course would not take a very different direction, and lead us to be too impatient when suffering wrongfully, too eager to seek compensation, too tenacious in maintaining supposed rights, and too apt to look about for reasons why we should refuse to “*give to him that asketh.*”

Even when the natural disposition is controlled by divine grace, and the angry and selfish passions are kept in subjection; we shall find need for constant circumspection and earnest prayer, that our spirit may be “peaceable, full of mercy and good fruits:” that our practice may be in conformity with the royal law, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them.”^a

LECTURE XII.

FORGIVENESS OF ENEMIES REQUIRED IN CHRISTIANS.

MATT. v. 43—48.

43. “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.
 44. “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
 45. “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

THE words, *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, are found in Leviticus xix. 18. It would have been strange indeed, if the second clause, *thou shalt hate thine enemy*, had made a part of any general law pro-

^a Ch. vii. 12.

ceeding from God. How little then were the Scribes and Pharisees to be trusted, who thus perverted divine truth by their traditions! How truly were they called, "blind guides!"

But I say unto you, love your enemies. This too is required in the Old Testament. "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again."¹ Our Lord points it out as the characteristic duty of his religion. He came not to destroy the moral rules which had been before laid down: but He restores the most important precepts of the law of Moses, which the Pharisees had either perverted, or kept out of view. He himself set the first example of the spirit which He here prescribes, when He prayed in behalf of those who had hurried Him to execution, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."² His disciple Stephen followed Him with a similar petition, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."³

It may be asked, perhaps, how can we comply with this precept? To love our friends is easy: but to love our enemies is unnatural. The answer is, that we must take means with ourselves to overcome the feelings of dislike, or the impulse of passion. We must not dwell upon the malice which others have shown: we must not make it the subject of discourse and complaint. We must call to mind all the excuses that may be found for them. We must, above all, pray for a forgiving spirit: pray that a sense of God's mercy, and of the goodness of Christ, may be so fixed and rooted in our hearts, that they may expand in love to all mankind. Thus *ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.* His children, renewed after his likeness. For this is the way in which God acts towards men; and therefore the way in which men ought to act towards one another. God sends

¹ Ex. xxiii. 4, 5. ² Luke xxiii. 34. ³ Acts vii. 60.

the blessings of his providence upon all ; *upon the just and the unjust* : upon those that serve Him, and those that serve Him not. We have daily experience that He does. For what a spectacle is this world ! In arms against God, their righteous governor ; refusing his laws, opposing his dominion. Even in a country like ours, so particularly enjoying the means of grace, how small is the number of those who really live to his glory ! Every trifle amuses, employs, engages them, and God is forgotten. Worse still, He is defied : defied by open sin ; by cursing ; by blasphemy ; by transgression of his laws. Yet God, though “strong,” is “patient ;” though “provoked every day,” He does not bring down that vengeance upon his enemies which they incur, or even call down upon themselves. He bears long with them : so long indeed, that men are emboldened to continue in their wickedness, instead of profiting by that mercy and long suffering, which ought to lead them to repentance. “Sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily.” He “is not willing that any should perish :” and therefore *He makes his sun to shine upon the evil and upon the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and on the unjust*. This thought should incline all Christians to *bless those that persecute them, to pray for those who despitefully use them*. A blessing often accompanies such a spirit of meekness : as was signally exemplified on an occasion which deserves to be recorded, when the simple prayer of a negro slave for his master, which the master unexpectedly overheard, was the means of converting his heart “from the power of Satan unto God.”

In all this, however, nothing unreasonable is required : we are not expected to cherish sentiments which it is impossible we should command. The natural inclination of man would lead him to “recompense evil for evil.” Against this the divine injunction is directed, and demands, that we “overcome evil with

good." We are not enjoined to seek out our enemies as our chief companions ; but to be benevolent, instead of revengeful, towards them.

For, such again is the example set before us for imitation. *Our Father which is in heaven maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and on the unjust :* He bestows his common and ordinary blessings upon all alike. But for his faithful servants, for *the good, the just*, He does this, and more also ; He has a greater treasure of mercies in store for them : for the promise is, "If any man love me, he will keep my words : and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." So the Christian loves all men, "honours all men," as the creatures of his God, "made in his own image ;" but this does not hinder his *especially* loving those who are united to him by the peculiar ties of kindred, obligation, similar sentiments, or reciprocal affection.

46. "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye ? Do not even the publicans the same ?

47. "And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others ? Do not even the publicans so ?

48. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

This passage indisputably requires, that the sincere and earnest servants of Christ should be known from others by a different course of conduct. *The publicans*—those who professed nothing, and of whom nothing was expected, are ready to assist and benefit their friends and relations. And if the disciples of Christ were to do nothing more, for what purpose are they called, and justified, and sanctified ? What proof is there that they have "put off the old man, and been renewed in the spirit of their mind" ?

We are here reminded, how dangerous it is to make common practice a rule for ourselves. When the

* John xiv. 23.

question is asked, *What do ye more than others?* nature is ready to reply, *What should we* do more than others? But, evidently, more is expected. The laws of the master must be the rules of the master's family; not those which may be observed elsewhere. "Be ye holy, as He who hath called you is holy;" be ye patient, as He is patient; be ye merciful, as He is merciful. So ye may prove yourselves the *children of your Father which is in heaven*. The child is to do more in obedience to the father than strangers; he is to be more active in service, more devoted in love. If we are no better than "the children of this world" in our character and conduct, we shall be no better in our everlasting condition. If we expect to rise beyond others in glory, we must go beyond others here on earth in obedience. Nay, we are *to be perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect*. We are to set before us this example of supreme excellence; we are to "be followers of God, as his dear children;" to be as merciful, as forgiving, as desirous to benefit others, as God himself is, the author of all good things.

This is what we are required to do. Yet how prone are our hearts to act otherwise! Even the apostles were willing to draw down "fire from heaven" against their adversaries, till their Lord warned them, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of."⁵ Learn, therefore, to pass by in silence reproachful language, instead of rendering "railing for railing;" try to forget insults and evil falsely spoken, instead of cherishing the injury in your minds. Aspire after the praise which belonged to a great man of former times, concerning whom it was currently said, that whoever desired to receive a benefit from him, might become sure of it by first doing him an injury.

Divine grace alone can enable us to maintain this exalted temper. Implore the aid of the Holy Spirit, that ye may "walk as Christ walked;" may show that

⁵ Luke ix. 54, &c.

kindness, that forgiveness towards others, which He has shown towards you, and which all desire and hope to find when standing before the judgment-seat of God.

LECTURE XII

HYPOCRISY IN ALMSGIVING AND PRAYER.

MATT. vi. 1—6.

1. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them : otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.
2. "Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
3. "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth :
4. "That thine alms may be in secret : and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."

THESE words expose further the hypocrisy of those who were admired in that day as patterns of righteousness. Their object was, to have the praise of men : and as almsgiving is naturally popular, and commands applause, they would argue, that meaning to be well spoken of, they must be ready to distribute ; but, at the same time, contrive that what they gave should be no secret, otherwise they would lose the return they were seeking. Therefore, said our Lord, *the hypocrites sound a trumpet before them in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be seen of men.*

Now how will the Christian feel in this matter ? The words of St. John will be an actuating principle within him : "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ?"¹ Therefore he will make it a regular part of

¹ 1 John iii. 17.

his expenditure, to give, according to his ability, in whatever way he deems most really beneficial to his fellow-creatures. But this will not be blazoned abroad. Few will be aware of it. *His left hand will not know what his right hand doeth.* His concern is not with man, but with God: who alone will see that he holds himself as a steward who must give account of the talents intrusted to him, and that the only reward he looks for, is the favour of his *Father which seeth in secret.*

At the same time, there may be proper seasons and fit occasions, when a Christian's liberality should be public and *seen of men.* He is to be a pattern of good works that others may imitate them. All depends upon the intention. If the object is present applause, present applause will be the sole reward. If the object is the glory of God, the charity will be either public or private, according as God is likely to be glorified by it most successfully. Just as in prayer, of which our Lord proceeds to speak. If it is sincere, it will not be ostentatious. Yet Daniel is not blamed, but praised, though he made what may be called an ostentatious prayer, a prayer which might be seen of men, when, in defiance of the impious decree which forbade him, "he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."⁵ In his case this was as much his duty, as it was the duty of the Pharisees to avoid the hypocritical practice which Jesus here condemns.

5. "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
6. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

⁵ Dan. vi. 10.

The hypocrisy which is here exposed, though still common in Eastern countries, is so unlike the manners of our time and nation, that we might seem to be in no danger of a like error. Consider, however, what the error is. It is the performance of religious duties for the sake of appearances, and not from a feeling of religion. It is the doing that *to be seen of men*, which ought to be done from piety towards God. And is there no reason amongst ourselves, to fear that the attendance of some persons at church, or at the holy table, arises from a like impure motive? is rather a compliance with custom, than an exercise of devotion? a mode of maintaining decent respectability, rather than of satisfying the desire of piety and faith? Thus much is certain. The stated and ceremonial worship of the Church is less to be depended on as a proof of the truly spiritual mind, than the secret prayer of the private chamber. It is no disparagement to either, to say that religious feeling will not be satisfied with one without the other. It will not be satisfied without the public worship of God. David, our teacher in devotion, has exclaimed,³ "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." But the same David has also said, "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."⁴ "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord: in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up."⁵ "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice."⁶ That spiritual aid by which we may be strengthened, and overcome our besetting sins: those mercies which are most needful to ourselves and our families: the blessings of providence and of grace which we individually need,—these must be sought in private prayer. We

³ Ps. lxxxiv. 1—3.⁴ Ps. iv. 4.⁵ Ps. v. 3.⁶ Ps. lv. 17.

cannot be so alone, but God is with us ; we cannot whisper so gently, but He heareth us ; we cannot pray so imperfectly, but He will answer us. *He seeth in secret, and He rewardeth openly.* So He rewarded Hannah, the mother of Samuel.⁷ She was "in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore ;" "she spake in her heart : only her lips moved : but her voice was not heard." Not heard of men : but not unheard of God : and the "God of Israel granted the petition that she asked of Him." So likewise was Cornelius rewarded, openly rewarded, as the first Gentile to whom the Gospel was made known. He had *shut his door* against the world and its cares, and *prayed to his Father who is in secret.* As he explained to Peter the reason why he had sent for him to Joppa,⁸ "Four days ago, I was fasting unto this hour ; and at the ninth hour I prayed in mine house, and, behold a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance before God."

Thus Hannah and Cornelius experienced that "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears open unto their prayers." A still greater encouragement is granted to the believer in Christ Jesus, to whom belongs the privilege that he should be called a child of God ;" who has "received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father ;"⁹ concerning whom the Lord declared, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God :"² and again, "I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you ; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."

"Having therefore such exceeding great and precious promises," we "come boldly to the throne of grace," "and in everything by prayer and supplication

⁷ 1 Sam. i. 10.

⁸ Acts x. 30.

⁹ See 1 John iii. 1.

¹ Rom. viii. 15.

² John xx. 17.

make our requests known unto God." *We enter into our closet, and when we have shut the door, we pray to our Father which is in heaven.*

LECTURE XIV.

PRAYER.

MATT. vi. 7—15.

7. "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.
8. "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask."

THIS is the thought which should always be present to our minds in prayer. What we are required to express, is not our wants, but our desires. *Our heavenly Father knoweth what things we have need of, before we ask Him.* Mere repetition is not here forbidden; for repetition is consistent with earnestness, and a natural result of earnestness. Our blessed Lord himself, in the season of his agony at Gethsemane, "prayed the third time, saying the same words."¹ Importunity, or perseverance in prayer, is specially inculcated in the parable which represents the unjust judge as overcome by the urgent entreaty of the suitor who claimed redress from him.* The error against which we are warned is a *vain repetition*; as if *much speaking*, the mere utterance of words, could be acceptable to God. As if, for instance, it would be a service pleasing to him, to fix a certain number of times for repeating a certain form of prayer, to count these times by artificial means, lest there should be one too many, or one too few, and when the tale was completed to consider the task as done, and the work

¹ Ch. xxvi. 44.

² Luke xviii. 1, &c.

of prayer performed. He was a prophet indeed who could foresee the need of guarding his disciples against such vanities. And it is humbling to think that his words have rather proved a testimony to condemn, than a warning to preserve; that they are few who "worship God in spirit and in truth," compared with those whose worship is mere form and ceremony, and whose prayers may be justly censured as *vain repetitions*.

He, however, who has taught us what to avoid, has also taught us what to imitate: and has left us an example of the kind of prayer which God approves and will graciously receive.

9. "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name:
10. "Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven:
11. "Give us this day our daily bread:
12. "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors:
13. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.
14. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
15. "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

For if a man harbours malice in his heart against his brother, refuses to forgive him his trespasses whilst he seeks that his own may be forgiven, his prayer will be of no avail. He has not the spirit to which mercy can be shown. Like the impure vessel which taints the purest water, the revengeful, uncharitable heart would mar the effect of the most perfect form of prayer.

Indeed, the PRAYER here taught by our Lord to his disciples, and left for their continual use, is only suited to the renewed heart, as enlightened by the Holy Ghost. It will be a *vain repetition*, it will be an unmeaning form, unless the love of God, as well as of man, should fill the heart of those who offer it. To what purpose would its petitions be uttered by one who is not in a state of reconciliation with his heavenly

Father ? How could such an one desire that the *name* should be *hallowed*, which he himself held in no reverence, and to which he paid no honour ? How could he wish that his *kingdom* should *come*, his dominion be extended until "all the kingdoms of the earth become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ" ?³ How pray, that his *will* may be *done* by men below, as readily and as completely as it is fulfilled by the angels who surround his throne, and "do his pleasure" ? This will be the earnest prayer of those who love God, and of those alone. As the Lord Jesus forgot his own wants that He might instruct the Samaritan at the well of Sychar, and found it his "meat and drink to finish the work of Him who sent Him ;"⁴ so will the disciple of Jesus seek first his heavenly Father's glory. But he must first be reconciled to his Father, and then come and offer this prayer.

Again, if we use our Lord's words sincerely and intelligently, our love of worldly things must be slight and moderate, compared with our desire of spiritual blessings. One short petition suffices to ask for our *daily bread*. To be forgiven our trespasses, to be preserved from temptation, and delivered from the snares of the evil one,—these are the real wants of life. All other things are insignificant in comparison. If we have this, we have everything ; if we are without this, we have nothing.

After this manner therefore pray ye : in a spirit of love to God, and of charity towards man : in an humble spirit, which feels its daily short-comings, its habitual infirmities ; in a forgiving spirit, which is too conscious of its own need of pardon to be severe against the trespasses of others. Prayer offered in this tone of mind, is acceptable to God. It is his will to "be inquired of" by his people, even though *He knoweth what things they have need of, before they ask Him.*"⁵ It is their

³ Rev. xi. 15.

⁴ John iv. 34.

⁵ See Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

intercourse with *their Father which is in heaven*. They thus “draw nigh to Him,” and He to them. The Scriptures abound with proof, that such prayers enter into the ears of the Lord, and come up “as a memorial before Him.”⁶

LECTURE XV.

HYPOCRITICAL MORTIFICATION.

MATT. vi. 16—18.

16. “Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”

To the other species of hypocrisy which our Lord had before condemned, another is now added, that of fasting, or feigned humiliation: outward mortification. The hypocrite knows that there is a disposition to admire one who appears to be above the world, and to despise what others value. People shall perceive, said the Pharisee, that I am not like themselves. I fast thrice in the week: I put sackcloth on my limbs, and ashes on my head. They will respect these signs of mourning and penitence: they will be astonished at so much holiness and self-denial.

And these *have their reward*. This popular reverence is the reward they seek; and it is theirs.

Thus through the corruption of human nature sacred duties become profane, and sin is aggravated by the pretence of humiliation for sin.

The custom of fasting arose among the Jews from the appointment under the law of an annual “day of atonement:” concerning which order was made, “It shall be a holy convocation to you: and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the

⁶ Acts i. 4.

Lord. And ye shall do no work in that same day ; for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people.”¹

Now God has mercifully ordained that the use of food should not only be a necessary support, but an enjoyment to man. Not only is hunger painful, but the satisfaction of hunger is pleasant. And therefore abstinence from food was treated as part of that “affliction of soul” which was prescribed on the “day of atonement.” And fasting became a sign of humiliation and repentance, whenever the individual, or the community at large, professed sorrow for sin. And this, not merely from imitation of the effect of anxiety of mind, which, when it is vehement, takes away the appetite for food : as we are told of Ahab, that he “would eat no bread,” because of his disappointment in the matter of Naboth’s vineyard :² and of Darius, that when he had consented to the death of Daniel, and consigned him to the den of lions, he “passed the night fasting :”³—it was also considered an act of self-denial which was suitable to a season of repentance and confession of sin. For so the prophet describes his own practice, and says, “In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.”⁴ It was a joyful festival, when after their return from Babylon the people dedicated themselves afresh to God, and rejoiced in the words of his law : and Nehemiah “said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared ; for this day is holy unto our Lord : neither be ye sorry ; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”⁵ And on the same principle it was a

¹ Lev. xxiii. 27—31.

² 1 Kings xxi. 4.

³ Dan. vi. 18.

⁴ Dan. x. 2—3.

⁵ Neh. viii. 9—10.

part of mourning and self-abasement, to abstain from "pleasant bread," and from "wine that gladdens man's heart, and oil that makes him of a cheerful countenance." The outward practice ought to agree with the inward feeling; there should not be the taste for enjoyment when there was the profession of deep sorrow: it would not be "such a fast as God hath chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul,"⁶ if he indulged himself in those gratifications which the soul delights in.

But still less would it be a fast acceptable to God, if the outward show of mortification was attended with no correspondent feeling of the heart: if the signs of mourning concealed thoughts of pride and self-complacency within: if men *disfigured their faces, that they might appear unto men to fast*, whilst no humble, no penitent feeling was raised towards God, no sorrow for transgression entertained in the heart, no purpose of obedience designed.

But the *Father who seeth in secret, will reward* the self-condemning penitent, who dares "not so much as to lift up his eyes to heaven," and says, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"⁷ and who, because he feels thus, has no taste for the indulgences of life, and refuses them, as unsuited to his state of mind. He will also reward the self-inquiring Christian, who, in the course of his conflict against sin dwelling within him, might find by experience, that the indulgence of one appetite provoked another, and that the more he restrained his bodily inclinations, and refused to gratify them, the better he was able to serve God in all things, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Therefore he might determine with himself to *fast, i. e.* to eat sparingly, and of the simplest things, such as are least likely to provoke a sinful thought or action. Or he might regulate himself according to a rule which has been recommended by eminent Chris-

⁶ See Isa. lviii. 5.

⁷ Luke xviii. 13.

tians, and “deny himself” in something every day ; on the principle of the Apostle, where he says, “All things are lawful unto me ; but I will not be brought under the power of any :”^a I will not make them necessary to me. But this would be a matter between himself and God ; his nearest friend would not be aware of it ; much less would he proclaim it to the multitude. And such abstinence, grounded on the right exercise of reason, and pursued for the sake of acquiring self-command, is as surely approved of our heavenly Father, as the pretence of it is condemned. So the Lord declares,

17. “But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face ;
18. “That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”

He who *seeth in secret*, will at the great day of account, lay open much hypocrisy which had here, perhaps, received unmerited applause, and will reward those unseen acts of piety and self-denial, which have been here practised in “his faith and fear,” practised for the purpose of preventing transgression, not with the vain design of atoning for transgression ; practised that “the flesh might be subdued to the spirit,” and kept ready to obey “his godly motions.” “With such sacrifices God is well pleased.” They are proofs not of hypocrisy, but of sincerity. For if we indeed lament our past offences, and grieve over our daily infirmities, we shall be no more disposed to pamper those appetites by which they have been engendered, than one would be disposed to “go to the house of feasting,” who was mourning over the death of a dear friend.

^a 1 Cor. vii. 12.



LECTURE XVI.

THE RIGHT DIRECTION OF THE HEART.

MATT. vi. 19—23.

19. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal :
 20. "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.
 21. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

WHEN the patriarch Jacob received the unexpected tidings that his son Joseph, whom he had long mourned over as lost, was yet living, and enjoying a post of high honour in the land of Egypt, we are told that the heart of the aged parent revived ; and he exclaimed in a transport of delight, "It is enough : Joseph my son is yet alive ; I will go and see him before I die."¹ Joseph was *his treasure* ; and *his heart was there*, where Joseph was. To leave his place of abode ; to enter upon a wearisome journey ; to visit an unknown country, was nothing to him :—Joseph was yet alive, and he might go and see him before he died. Most persons who have lived some years in the world will understand this : They have been absent from that object which was dearest to them on earth ; and *where the treasure was, there was their heart also*.

Our Lord's words are designed to turn the desires and feelings of the heart into the right direction. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth*, where they cannot long profit you ; but *lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*, which shall be yours after many days. Let your chief thought, your main purpose, be to attain "that world and the resurrection of the dead." Judge of earthly things, not as they are pleasing or

¹ Gen. xlv. 28.

profitable now, but as they will promote or hinder your first business, which is the salvation of the soul. As St. John has repeated, in other words, his Lord's exhortation; "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: For the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are not of the Father, but of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever."²

The danger, therefore, against which we are here warned, is not merely the sin of covetousness. The precept forbids that any earthly object shall so possess the heart as to furnish its ruling motive. To the ambitious man, reputation, advancement in honour and station is the treasure. To the proud man, the reverence paid to him by the submission of others; to the lover of earthly gratifications, the enjoyments of the world are the treasure, as much as the increase of his substance to the lover of riches. The seeker of pleasure; the ambitious man; the man whose grand concern is to advance himself or his family; all these *lay up their treasures* upon earth, as much as he who makes wealth his idol. If our heart is so earnestly set upon any of these worldly things, that we seek them more diligently than we seek heaven, then they are our *treasure*, the principle of our life is wrong, and we are following an object which leads to disappointment and ends in death.

This is further illustrated by an example:

22. "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.
 23. "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

The light of the body is the eye: the eye leads and directs the motions of the body; and what the eye is to the body, such is, to the man, the ruling desire of

² 1 John ii. 15.

the heart; the principle of action. *If the eye be evil, fails or misleads, the whole body is full of darkness*; so, if the principle of action be wrong, the whole conduct of life is wrong.

Therefore, if it is the principle of a man's life to *lay up treasures on earth, to set his affections there, the light in him is darkness*; he works by a wrong rule, he "labours for that which satisfies not;" he will find himself deceived at the last. *How great is that darkness which misleads the whole life!*

But if his eye be single, if his first object be that which the Gospel prescribes, to *lay up treasures in heaven*, then *his whole body shall be full of light*: this principle will reduce all the concerns and affairs of life into proper order, and show them in their true colours, their real magnitude.

The rich worldling, in the parable, betrayed his ruling principle when he said, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."³ Such was the light he followed; and how soon it ended in darkness! "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

St. Paul, on the other hand, showed a very different principle, when he said concerning himself, "The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."⁴

Thus *his eye was single*, looking to one object only; and *his whole body was full of light*: his whole conduct was directed by a right principle. To "finish his course with joy," to obtain that "crown of righteousness" which the Lord the righteous judge shall give

³ Luke xii. 17—19.

⁴ Acts xx. 23.

"to his faithful servants," this was his heart's desire ; and therefore "bonds and afflictions," the pains of imprisonment and even the pains of death could not move him, because they could not take away his treasure. This treasure was in heaven ; and whatever forwarded his progress towards heaven, however outwardly grievous, would bring its consolation with it, because it would carry him nearer to his treasure. Just as a removal from his home, and his journey through a desert was welcome to the aged Jacob, because it carried him to the land where his beloved son might be once more seen. The lover of this world recoils from the thought of death, because he must leave his treasure behind him when he leaves this world ; but the faithful follower of Christ is going to his treasure when taken from things below ; going only to that scene of glory where his heart has been long fixed, and to those true joys prepared at the right hand of God for them that love Him. "For he knows that if his earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, he has a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."^a

LECTURE XVII.

RELIANCE ON GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CARE.

MATT. vi. 24—34.

24. "No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."¹

IN the verses which precede this, our Lord has strongly urged the necessity of seeing and pursuing our real interest in life, and laying up treasure which should never fail. Here He warns us, that this must

^a 2 Cor. v. 1.

¹ Mammon is a Syriac word, signifying money or gain.

be done simply and decidedly ; He shows, by an unanswerable example, that we cannot serve this world and the next together. We must as surely set before ourselves a leading object, as a man must choose a certain master. *No man can serve two*, without, at times, deserting one of them.

The heart of the worldly man often deceives him in this. He flatters himself that he is only paying a necessary attention to things on earth, and that he is still "laying up treasure in heaven." But occasions must arise when the interests of Mammon and of God are opposed to one another, and there must be a firm resolution, and a decided choice, that God is to be served. "The double minded man is unstable in all his ways."

25. "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ?"

This is the answer to the objection which human nature is likely to cast in the way of the preceding exhortations. Men will be disposed to ask, If we neglect worldly advantages, because the pursuit of them may endanger the soul, what will become of the interests of our family ? Our Lord replies, *Take no thought*, no anxious thought concerning this. *Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ?* What would meat or raiment profit a man, who lost his life to obtain them ? Even so much would this world's good profit him, who in seeking it neglected his soul.*

26. "Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ?

27. "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature ?

* Doddridge has a different interpretation. "Is not life a more valuable gift than food, and the body than raiment ? And if it be, why should you not trust the Almighty Being who formed your bodies, to maintain the work of his own hands !"

28. "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:
 29. "And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
 30. "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith."

Here the timid, distrustful heart is strengthened by a further encouragement. Our apprehensions, our anxieties are a reproach upon God's providence. The man who rests upon his own exertions may be disappointed at last; *for which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature?* But whoever has chosen the world to come for his inheritance, has secured God for his protection: and will not He who has provided that *the fowls of the air* should not be without their natural food, or *the lilies of the field* perish for lack of moisture; will not He far more surely make his adopted children, those who trust in Him, his care, and see that they neither want their "bread to eat, nor raiment to put on?" While many "rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness," God "giveth his beloved sleep;" gives them a calm tranquillity respecting worldly things, an experimental conviction that He will order matters better for them than they could order for themselves.

31. "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?
 32. " (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek :) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.
 33. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.
 34. "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

To the command which came before, is here added, in conclusion, an affectionate exhortation to direct all our anxieties towards the heavenly kingdom, and to "cast upon God all our care" respecting this world, "knowing that He careth for us." Leave it to *the*

Gentiles, who are not made children of God through adoption in Christ Jesus; leave it for them to immerse themselves in worldly cares: *ye have a heavenly Father who knoweth that ye have need of all these things.* Do you doubt his knowing it? or do you believe that, knowing your need, He will suffer you to perish in your need? Why should the child perplex itself about its food or its clothing? why be uneasy, beforehand, concerning that which is its parent's business, and which its parent will certainly provide? Even so God is the Christian's parent, and to distrust his care, is to deny his faithfulness. "I have been young," are the words of David, "and now am old:" "yet never saw I the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread." If we *seek first the kingdom of God*, and are aiming above all things to approve ourselves *righteous* in his sight, He will lead us to righteousness and its reward: this is the chief concern:—but more also *shall be added unto you*. As he promised Solomon, "Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself: wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee: And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour."³

"Oh, what a blessed change would it make in our hearts and lives, did we but firmly believe this truth, that the best way to be comfortably provided for in this world, is to be most intent upon another world! We then begin at the right end of our work, when we begin with God. Let us mind present duty, and then leave events to him. Do the work of to-day in its day, and then let to-morrow bring its work along with it. If this is our resolution, the Lord will provide as much of the comforts of this life as He sees good for us, and more of them we need not wish for. Have we

³ 2 Chron. i. 7—12; 1 Kings iii. 13.

trusted Him for 'the portion of our inheritance at the end,' and shall we not trust Him for 'the portion of our cup,' in the way to it? O that we were more thoughtful about 'the things that are not seen, and are eternal,' and then the less thoughtful we should be, and the less thoughtful we should need to be, about the things that are seen, that are temporal."

LECTURE XVIII.

UNCHARITABLE JUDGMENTS FORBIDDEN.

MATT. vii. 1—5.

1. "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

IN one sense, it is our duty to *judge*. St. Paul exhorts us to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good;"¹ and instructs the Roman disciples to "mark them which caused divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which they had learned, and avoid them."² Further, our Lord himself commands us to "beware of false prophets," and to form our judgment of them according to wise discrimination; saying, "Ye shall know them by their fruits."

That which is here forbidden, is the too common fault, rash and censorious judgment: imputation of bad motives, where motives are doubtful; condemnation of others, without accurate knowledge of the circumstances under which they have acted.

Joseph, for example, in the book of Genesis, would have been blameable if he had spoken in earnest what he did speak to prove his brethren, when he accused them of coming down to Egypt with the evil intention of spying out "the nakedness of the land:" examining

⁴ Henry *in loco*.

¹ 1 Thess. v. 25.

² Rom. xvi. 17.

how they might best invade it.³ They might possibly have had that design: and on the other hand, there was nothing improbable in the design which they professed, the providing food for their family at home. To assume the wrong motive, and reject the innocent purpose; to treat them as spies, because it was possible they might be spies, would have been unrighteous judgment. For it is one among the features of charity, that it "believeth all things;"⁴ believeth the best that the case admits: "thinketh no evil," where there is any opening to think well, and hope favourably. Charity will rather be deceived, through an unwillingness to suspect, than injure another even in thought. For, as St. Paul argues, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth."⁵ He said this concerning a matter of indifference; the eating or not eating of certain meats; the keeping or not keeping sacred certain days. If it had been a question concerning any part of duty, of worshipping for instance, or not worshipping in an idol's temple, they would have been bound to *judge*, and to pronounce such worshipping sinful, even though it condemned any of their brethren. But of things indifferent, or when there was no need of censure, he solemnly asks, "Why dost thou judge thy brother, or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Every one of us shall give account of himself to God."⁶

The sanction by which our Lord enforces this precept, is remarkable:

2. "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

As it is written, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy:" and as we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass

³ Gen. xlii. 9.

⁴ 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

⁵ Rom. xiv. 4.

⁶ Rom. xiv. 10—12.

against us :” in the same spirit is it said, *With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.* A habit of harsh and censorious *judgment* indicates a heart not properly renewed and influenced by divine grace ; indicates, therefore, a heart not sound in the faith of Christ, and liable to be judged by Him, “in whose sight no man living shall be justified.” If He were to mark severely what is done amiss, who could abide it ? And if we break his commands, by judging uncharitably of our neighbours, how can we expect his clemency to judge mercifully of ourselves, not weighing our demerits, but pardoning our offences ?

Our business, in fact, is not to judge others, but ourselves, and the best security against severe censures of our brother, will be to look closely and diligently at home.

3. “ And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye ?
4. “ Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye ; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye ?
5. “ Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye : and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”

No one is so little likely to judge severely of another’s offences, as the man who has most anxiously laboured to keep his own conscience void of offence : who has attended most closely to the workings of his own heart, and found the difficulty of bringing his words and actions to a conformity with the will of God. Let a man therefore *first cast the beam out of his own eye.* Let him strive against his own besetting sin. This will teach him the nature of the disease : how deeply it is seated, how liable to return. Consider, for instance, the state of David’s mind, whilst reflecting upon his sins, and lamenting over them. “ I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

⁷ This was a proverb among the Jews : Those who say to others, Take out the *small piece of wood* from beneath *thy tooth* ; are answered, “ Take out of *thine eyes the beam.*”

Against thee have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.”^a One who has been thus examining himself, and condemning his own guilt, is not inclined to judge harshly concerning a brother. He will rather exclaim, Who am I, that I should judge another? I, who am seeking pardon for myself? I, who have so much need of pardon?

There is reason to fear that one who is ready, and quick-sighted, to *perceive the mote that is in his brother's eye*, has never looked so clearly into his own: and may rather be compared with the same David on another occasion, and in a different state of mind, when he was vehemently indignant against the cruelty represented in Nathan's parable, and declared, “The man who hath done this thing, shall surely die.”^b He little expected the answer, “Thou art the man.” *First cast the beam out of thine own eye, and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

The true Christian conduct in this matter is prescribed by St. Paul: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness.” He adds the reason, founded on our Lord's words: “Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”^c St. James uses the same argument:—“Brethren, be not many masters;” (teachers, or censors:) “knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation:” knowing that if we censure others, we condemn ourselves; that *with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again*. “For he shall have judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy:”^d he must forgive, who hopes to be forgiven.

^a Ps. li. 3, 4.^b 2 Sam. xii. 5.^c Gal. vi. 1^d Ch. iii. 1, 2.^e James ii. 13.

LECTURE XIX.

DISCRIMINATION TO BE USED IN PROPOUNDING DIVINE TRUTH.

MATT. vii. 6.

6. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

So it proved in the case of Stephen, the first who sealed his faith by his blood, and experienced the truth of his Lord's words, predicting that his people should be killed by men professing to "do God service."¹ When they heard the things that he said, "they were cut to the heart, and gnashed on him with their teeth; they ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him."² They *turned again and rend him*. The multitude would have done the same to Paul at Jerusalem, if they had not been providentially restrained. When he declared how God had sent him to the Gentiles, "they lifted up their voices and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live."³ This was to *turn again and rend him*. Stephen indeed, and Paul, were discharging a duty: they were commissioned to speak the things which excited the violence of their countrymen. And our Lord's precept in this sentence does not extend farther than to teach a wise discretion in declaring divine truths to men. When He sent his disciples to proclaim his coming, and prepare the way for Himself, He prescribed the same discretion, saying, "Into whatever city or town ye enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide."⁴ Inquire for those whose character makes it probable that one who comes from God will be favourably re-

¹ John xvi. 2.² Acts vii. 54.³ Acts xxii. 22.⁴ Ch. x. 11.

ceived, and not rejected by them. There are some, with whom to talk of holy things is to profane them ; and who will turn against religion itself the very arguments which are furnished by religion. So that, as was said by Solomon, " He that reproveth a scorner, getteth himself shame."⁵ There are places and seasons when to press *that which is holy* upon men, would be to expose it to contempt and ridicule, and no more wise or reasonable than to *cast pearls before swine*. At Antioch in Pisidia, for example, where " the Jews were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming, Paul and Barnabas acted upon this maxim of their Lord, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken unto you ; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo ! we turn to the Gentiles. And they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium."⁶

There is a limit, however, beyond which this precept must not be carried. If it were so construed, as to require that men should be willing hearers before they heard at all, or doers of the word before the word was proposed to them, it would contradict the whole purpose of the gospel. If we were to wait till unholy or ungodly men came of their own accord to listen to the words which condemn or the truths which should convert them, no sinner would be turned from the error of his way, no wanderer reclaimed, or brought to repentance and the knowledge of the truth. If they who have not that knowledge, and are living in ignorance and sin, were treated as *dogs*, so that nothing holy should be offered them, or as *swine*, and were not directed to the " pearl of great price " for which they might leave their filthiness ;—how should the will of God be answered, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live ?⁷ or how

⁵ Prov. ix. 7.⁶ Acts xiii. 45—51.⁷ Ezek. xviii. 23.

should the command of Christ be obeyed, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"? "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in"? The prophet Ezekiel was sent upon a mission which might well have been reckoned hopeless: "Thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, or be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house; and thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear; for they are most rebellious."

It is the dreadful doom of those who live in iniquity and die in impenitence, "He that is unholy, let him be unholy still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." But to pass this awful sentence, must be left for God: the language of man must always be, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." When the hand of the Lord was upon the prophet, and carried him out in the Spirit of the Lord, and "set him down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and lo, they were very dry;" he did not dare to pronounce that they could not live: but answered, "O Lord God, thou knowest." And then he was commanded; "Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry

* Mark xvi. 15. Luke xiv. 23. * See Ezek. xxxvii. 1—10; ii. 6.

1 "Hereby it appears how wickedly they wrest the words of Christ, who think that he restrains the doctrine of the Gospel to those only who are apt to be taught, and well prepared. For what should be done, if godly preachers called no man but him that now by his obedience prevents the grace of God? when by nature we all are rather wicked, and bent to stubbornness? Wherefore the remedy of salvation is to be denied to none but them that filthily refuse the same offered to them, that it may appear they are reprobate, and condemned of themselves."—*Calvin in loco*.

* Rev. xxii. 11.

* Ezek. xxxvii. 6, 7.

bones, hear the word of the Lord. So he prophesied, and breath came into them, and they lived and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

And so there would rise up before us an exceeding great army, of all nations and ages, if all could be summoned together whom man would have been ready to pronounce cast-away, "to every good work reprobate;" but who have "been washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;" who turning away from the wickedness which they had committed, and doing that which is lawful and right, have shown forth the praises of Him who had called them out of darkness into marvellous light.

LECTURE XX.

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PRAYER.

MATT. vii. 7—11.

7. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:
8. "For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

SUPPOSE for a moment these words to be inscribed over a rich man's gate, and figure to your minds the crowds which would be found there. Not because our need of temporal things is greater than our need of spiritual blessings; not that to be destitute of the one is worse than to be destitute of the other; not that there is any comparison between what the rich man could give, and what God graciously offers to give:—but because men are sensibly alive to their temporal wants, but are grievously indifferent towards those wants which concern the soul.¹

¹ That spiritual blessings are chiefly intended in this passage, appears from the parallel verse in St. Luke: "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!"

We see, however, the encouragement which the words were intended to convey, from the connexion in which they are found. The disciples had been listening to many difficult injunctions. They had been instructed to hold this present world in light esteem, and to seek first the kingdom of God: to make it their great business to lay up treasures in heaven: to obey commandments, against which flesh and blood would earnestly contend. And they might naturally ask, or at least think within themselves, "who is sufficient for these things?" Our Lord meets this inquiry by the assurance, repeated by his apostles afterwards, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally. Only let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven here and there, and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."²

This caution of St. James, "Only let a man ask in faith," exactly agrees with what we read here. To *ask*, to *seek*, to *knock*, implies that earnestness and perseverance which arises out of perfect confidence that He of whom we ask and seek, is able to grant our petitions. It explains also why much of what is called prayer, obtains no answer, receives no blessing. Unless a want is felt, there can be no sincerity in prayer: none of that earnestness with which the mother of Samuel besought the Lord, in her anxiety for a son:³ when, as we are told, she "spoke in her heart; only her lips moved; but her voice was not heard, as she poured out her soul unto the Lord." Conscious of her urgent supplication, she says afterwards, "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him."⁴ So again, *Seek, and ye shall find*. Seeking implies perseverance; as described in the parable,⁵ when she who has lost a piece of money, lights her candle, and sweeps the house,

² James i. 2—4.³ 1 Sam. i. 13.⁴ Sam. i. 27.⁵ Luke xv. 8.

and seeks diligently until she find it: or as the like promise is given in the book of Proverbs;⁶ "If thou seekest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest for her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." How much is spoken every day, and passes under the name of prayer, with no sign of this earnest seeking!—Further, *knock, and it shall be opened unto you*. Persevere like the beggar at a gate, where he expects to obtain relief: like the Canaanite who had been for twelve years a sufferer, and could not be kept back or turned aside till she had reached the Lord, and touched the hem of his garment.⁷ He who is within the gate, knows whether we knock in earnest, really desiring that it should be opened; whether when we pray for the hallowing of his name, or the coming of his kingdom, a care for his glory is really in our hearts; whether when we pray not to be led into temptation, but delivered from evil, we are indeed dreading and avoiding sin as our greatest danger.

It is this prayer of faith and perseverance that has the assurance of success; ye shall not *ask, and seek, and knock*, in vain. And since promises are sometimes doubted, as if too great to be accomplished, our Lord even vouchsafes to reason with us and asks, Do not ye, notwithstanding all the *evil* there is about you, give such *good gifts* as are in your power to *your children*? How much more shall your *heavenly Father*, who is altogether holy and righteous, *give good things* to those who are made his "children by adoption and grace," when they sincerely and earnestly desire them?

9. "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

10. "Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?"

⁶ Prov. iii. 3—5.

⁷ See Mark v. 27.

11. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

A gracious encouragement to prayer is given in these words. But how lightly it is valued! How commonly is prayer considered as a burthensome duty, rather than a delightful privilege!

The way to judge of this, is to reflect how it would be with those whose day of trial is over, and who are now "shut up in everlasting darkness unto the great day." If they who, while on earth, had refused to "hear Moses and the prophets," were now invited to ask for pardon, that they might receive it, to seek for grace that they might find it, to knock at the gate of heaven in time, and it should be opened unto them through eternity; how gladly would they welcome the invitation, and grasp at the offered blessing.

Let us, then, "seek the Lord whilst he may be found, and call upon him while he is near." Bitter indeed will be the reflection in the eternal world, that the pardon purchased by Christ, and all the unspeakable blessings attending it, might have been ours, had we thought them worth diligently seeking, in humble, fervent prayer.

Some, perhaps, may feel dispirited, and think that the promise of our Lord in this passage is hardly accomplished. They may lament that the supplies of grace, which they had looked for, are less speedily and less abundantly ministered than they hoped and expected. But let not this discourage them. The Spirit is not really ever absent, where his presence is anxiously desired. They may have grown in grace, yet their growth may have been imperceptible to themselves. One thing is sure, that they who have persevered in prayer, have not prayed in vain. God has given to them a "spirit of prayer and supplication," and this is a pledge and earnest of all other blessings.

LECTURE XXI.

THE RULE OF DUTY TOWARDS OTHERS.

MATT. vii. 12.

12. "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

IN *the law* delivered to the Jews by Moses, a man's conduct towards his neighbour is regulated; and numerous provisions are enacted to prevent cruelty and wrong dealing. The *prophets* enforce the same; and declare the anger of God against the nation because they had neglected these laws, and considered their own interests, not their neighbour's welfare. Our Lord lays down a precept, which, as He says, comprises in itself all that the law prescribed in regard to men's behaviour towards each other, and all that the prophets insisted on. *This is the law*—all the law is comprehended in this saying:—*this is the prophets*—by so acting ye will obey them:—*whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them*. So that if a man desire to fulfil the will of God in his dealings with another, he need not resort to books, or to men who are learned in books; he need only inquire of himself, his own feelings, his own conscience; then he will see the truth at once, and regulate his conduct by what he sees. A man loves himself too well, to do harm to himself; and if he treats his neighbour as he would himself be treated, he will do no harm to his neighbour. Let him transfer himself to his neighbour's place, and consider what in those circumstances he might expect—might justly and reasonably desire. Justly and reasonably. For the demand must be limited by reason, not dictated by covetousness. Lot, *for example*, could not justly have demanded as due to

him from another what Abraham yielded of his own accord : he could not expect the elder and the stronger to say, "The whole land is before thee ; if thou wilt take the right hand, then I will go to the left."¹ Here Abraham granted, in his liberality, more than reason or justice could strictly have required. But, on the other hand, Naboth had a right to expect that Ahab should remain satisfied with his own possessions, when he found that Naboth's conscience would not permit him to part with "the inheritance of his fathers."² The beggar who asks for alms, has no right to expect that his richer neighbour should change places with him. But he may justly expect that we "turn not away our face from him," but inquire into his case, and treat him as it deserves. He may be one who makes a trade of begging, and deserves nothing at our hands ; but he may also be one who is not to blame for the misfortunes which have brought him to indigence. The trading beggar, while he seeks relief, is conscious that he has no proper claim ; the man who is not criminal, but unfortunate, may justly require us to judge of his feelings by our own.

Suppose, for instance, the case in our Lord's parable, of the man who "fell among thieves," and was left by the way side, naked and wounded.³ The priest and Levite would not have passed by if they had consulted their own heart as to what they would have wished under a like calamity, and might reasonably have desired. So, again, it might have been an unjustifiable claim if Lazarus had expected a chamber in the rich man's house, or a place at his sumptuous banquets. But he might justly look for "the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table."⁴ It would be absurd to expect that one who hires the labourer to reap his fields or build his castle, should transfer himself to the labourer's place, and work in his stead. But he must

¹ Gen. xiii. 7—9. ² 1 Kings xxi. 2, 3. ³ Luke x. 30—32.

⁴ Luke xvi. 21.

Against thee have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.”⁸ One who has been thus examining himself, and condemning his own guilt, is not inclined to judge harshly concerning a brother. He will rather exclaim, Who am I, that I should judge another? I, who am seeking pardon for myself? I, who have so much need of pardon?

There is reason to fear that one who is ready, and quick-sighted, to *perceive the mote that is in his brother's eye*, has never looked so clearly into his own: and may rather be compared with the same David on another occasion, and in a different state of mind, when he was vehemently indignant against the cruelty represented in Nathan's parable, and declared, “The man who hath done this thing, shall surely die.”⁹ He little expected the answer, “Thou art the man.” *First cast the beam out of thine own eye, and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

The true Christian conduct in this matter is prescribed by St. Paul: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness.” He adds the reason, founded on our Lord's words: “Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”¹ St. James uses the same argument²—“Brethren, be not many masters;” (teachers, or censors:) “knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation:” knowing that if we censure others, we condemn ourselves; that *with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again*. “For he shall have judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy:”³ he must forgive, who hopes to be forgiven.

⁸ Ps. li. 3, 4.⁹ 2 Sam. xii. 5.¹ Gal. vi. 1² Ch. iii. 1, 2.³ James ii. 13.

LECTURE XIX.

DISCRIMINATION TO BE USED IN PROPOUNDING DIVINE TRUTH.

MATT. vii. 6.

6. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

So it proved in the case of Stephen, the first who sealed his faith by his blood, and experienced the truth of his Lord's words, predicting that his people should be killed by men professing to "do God service."¹ When they heard the things that he said, "they were cut to the heart, and gnashed on him with their teeth; they ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him."² They *turned again and rent him*. The multitude would have done the same to Paul at Jerusalem, if they had not been providentially restrained. When he declared how God had sent him to the Gentiles, "they lifted up their voices and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live."³ This was to *turn again and rend him*. Stephen indeed, and Paul, were discharging a duty: they were commissioned to speak the things which excited the violence of their countrymen. And our Lord's precept in this sentence does not extend farther than to teach a wise discretion in declaring divine truths to men. When He sent his disciples to proclaim his coming, and prepare the way for Himself, He prescribed the same discretion, saying, "Into whatever city or town ye enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide."⁴ Inquire for those whose character makes it probable that one who comes from God will be favourably re-

¹ John xvi. 2.² Acts vii. 54.³ Acts xxii. 22.⁴ Ch. x. 11.

LECTURE XXII.

THE WAY OF LIFE NARROW.

MATT. vii. 13, 14.

13. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:
 14. "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

WHAT is here declared, deserves our most serious attention, and must never be dismissed from our minds. It comes from Him who cannot deceive or be deceived; and He says, *strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

He says, that there are two ways, by which men are passing through this world to another; two different ways, and leading to different ends; that one of these is *strait* or *narrow*, found *by few*; the other *wide and broad*, and many go in thereat. Further, that the gate which few enter, is the *gate of life*; whilst the broad way which the many follow, *leadeth to destruction*.

This truth, however awful, agrees but too well with all we see and observe. *Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction.* Many paths unite and conduct to the same end.

Those must be in the way of destruction, who "live without God in the world;" those who—whether blinded by ignorance, or perverted by false philosophy;—whether occupied in business or immersed in pleasure,—still "have not God in all their thoughts," are regardless of his will, and do nothing to his glory.

Those must be in the way of destruction who live in the allowed practice of sin. "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."¹

¹ Eph. v. 5.

Those must be in the way of destruction who "having a form of godliness, deny the power thereof;" who "professing to serve God, in works deny Him." Such must at last expect the question, "How camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?"

And yet among these classes how large a portion of mankind is included! How many pass through the world with no settled view or plan of preparation for anything beyond! As if heaven were the only thing which they could not fail to find: everlasting happiness the only good which might be attained without seeking and without pains.

How many, again, instead of contending against the evil of their nature, indulge and yield to it! As if "to be carnally minded," instead of "death," were "life," and to "live after the flesh" here, were the appointed road to a life with God hereafter.*

If, then, on the most cursory view of the way in which mankind are living, we must allow that *the road to destruction is broad*, so we must equally perceive that *the way that leadeth unto life is narrow*.

For, first, it is one single way. The Author of eternal life has told us, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me."^a Therefore the Jews missed it, "because they refused to enter upon that only way." "Going about to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God."^b How many, as they did, stumble at that "stumbling stone, that rock of offence;" trusting to some way of salvation of their own or other men's devising, instead of believing the testimony which God hath given of his Son! This is the gate which we are invited to enter, as followers of Him, who "when He had overcome the sharpness of death, opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

But even when that way is seen to be the true way,

* See Rom. viii. 6—13.

* John xiv. 6.

* Rom. iv. 32, 33.

and is entered upon as such, many things render it difficult to keep. Persecution made it *strait* to the primitive Christians: trials of a like kind are not unknown now. The question is too natural, whether asked by mistaken friends, or asked by our own corrupt hearts. Why do *we* more than others? Why should *we* be more anxious than others whom we see around us, to secure our salvation? Why consent to strive for that which is commonly supposed to require neither labour nor self-denial?

Therefore many who "receive the word with gladness," endure but for a time; afterwards, "when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended." With another class, "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."

Hence the lamentable conclusion, *Strait is the gate which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*. Few, compared with those to whom the way is shown, but shown in vain: though some, perhaps, when it is too late, may "seek to enter in, and not be able," because they "knew not the time of their visitation."

This ruin, however, does not come upon them because the gate is hidden, hard to be discovered. The Scripture points it out so plainly, that he who runs may read, that "the wayfaring man, though a fool" as to human learning, "shall not err therein." For he is taught that "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that as many as believe in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life."⁷ And the Lord himself has said, "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and go in and out, and find pasture."⁸

Neither is the gate missed, because any who desire to enter are sent back, and it is closed against them. The heavenly kingdom is not like its prototype the

⁷ *Luke xiii. 24.*

⁸ *Isa. xxxv. 8.*

⁷ *John iii. 15.*

⁸ *John x. 9.*

earthly paradise, before which were placed "cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."⁹ The invitation is free: "Ho ye, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and ye that have no money, come, buy and drink."¹ The promise is universal, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."² The assurance is clear; "God willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, and the knowledge of the truth."³ The rich young man, indeed, who inquired of our Lord, "What shall I do to inherit life? did not *find it*."⁴ But not because it was shut against him; but because when he saw its straitness "he went away sorrowing," instead of entering in. So the Jewish nation did not enter: not because they were not invited, but because the chief rulers and the Pharisees turned from it, and the people turned from it too, because "they loved the praise of men."⁵ Multitudes in our own days, who are called by the ministry of the Church, and even enrolled among her members by baptism, turn back again when they discover that, if they proceed farther, they must leave their evil practices, and unbridled passions, and love of this world behind. Meanwhile, the God of heaven says, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?"⁶ The Redeemer says, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."⁷ And unhappily his words are verified, *Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat.*

This may justly warn us, but should not discourage. Rather should it animate us, to know that however wide may be the *gate of destruction*, there is a *gate which leadeth unto life*; which, *strait* as it is, whoever will may find; which though it be *narrow*, whoever will may be enabled to pass through.

⁹ Gen. iii. 24. ¹ Isa. lv. 1. ² John vi. 37. ³ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

⁴ Luke xviii. 18. ⁵ John xii. 43. ⁶ Ezek. xviii. 31. ⁷ John v. 40.

LECTURE XXIII.

WARNING AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS.

MATT. vii. 15—20.

15. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

THIS added to St. Paul's sorrow, when forced to leave his Christian disciples at Miletus ; he knew that after his departure "grievous wolves would enter in, not sparing the flock."¹ He knew that among the trials which the church must undergo, this must be reckoned ; there would be some who, "for filthy lucre's sake, would teach what they ought not :"² and others, who being themselves deceived, would lead the flock into dangerous error. Though "good seed is sown in the field," there is "an enemy who soweth tares."³ So it had been in former times. "The word of the Lord came unto Ezekiel, saying, Son of man, say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the Lord : Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing ! They have seen vanity and lying divination ; saying, The Lord saith ; and the Lord hath not sent them : and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The Lord saith it, albeit I have not spoken ? And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies ?"⁴

¹ Acts xx. 29.² Tit. i. 11.³ Ch. xiii. 27.⁴ Ezek. xii. 2, 3, 6, 7, 19.

Against these, and such as these, we are to *beware* : being warned beforehand that Satan will use this weapon against the church, that there will be those who corrupt and pervert the Gospel of Christ, as well as those who reject and scorn it. And our Lord furnishes a test by which they may be tried: a sign by which they may be known, and the false teachers distinguished from the true: namely, *by their fruits* : by the fruits which they bear themselves, and the fruits produced by the seed they sow, the doctrines they inculcate.

16. "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"
17. "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.
18. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
19. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.
20. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

The man that is corrupt himself, is not likely to make others pure and holy: the doctrine which is not according to God's own word will not so impress the heart, will not be so watered by the dew of heaven, as to bring forth where it is sown the proper fruits of the Spirit, "long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance."³ In nature, the produce depends upon the parent tree: men do not gather grapes where thorns have been planted, or figs where thistles have grown up: and so it is also in the field of grace; *every good tree bringeth forth good fruit*: faithful teachers of sound doctrine effect that purpose which God designed, when He sent forth his messengers to preach the Gospel in the world. They become the instruments through which men are "redeemed from iniquity," and made "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Every teacher that does not exhibit that character in himself, and study to produce it in

³ Gal. v. 23.

others, is a false teacher. Every doctrine which does not tend to promote individual righteousness and holiness, is false doctrine.

St. Paul, for example, complains of Hymenæus and Philetus, who "concerning the truth had erred, saying that the resurrection was passed already; and overthrown the faith of some."⁶ He complains also of false brethren who troubled the Galatians, and perverted the Gospel of Christ;⁷ taught them that the sacrifice once offered upon the cross was not a full, perfect, and sufficient propitiation for the sins of all men, and would not avail for salvation, unless they were circumcised, and conformed to the law of Moses. St. John, again, warns his disciples against false prophets who had gone out into the world, denying that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh:⁸ *i. e.* denying that the Son of God had really taken on Himself the nature of man.

If we try these teachers *by their fruits*, we see plainly that none of them could build up their hearers in that true faith of the Gospel, to which is annexed the promise of eternal life.

To say "that the resurrection is passed already," is to overthrow the basis of our Christian faith: to take from men their hope in the season of trial, and their defence against temptation. "Then is our faith vain, and they that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."⁹

If, as the Judaizing teachers affirmed, rites and ordinances can procure the forgiveness of sins, then is the work of Christ dishonoured, his sacrifice made of none effect: to hold this is to "fall from grace," and seek to be "justified by the law."¹⁰

And, again, unless we believe Jesus did really "come in the flesh," taking from his human mother the nature of man, there can be no right understand-

⁶ 2 Tim. ii. 17.

⁷ Gal. i. 7; iv. 12.

⁸ 1 John iv. 1—3.

⁹ 1 Cor. xv. 14—18.

¹⁰ Gal. v. 4.

ing of the scheme of redemption ; the deliverer from sin bearing its punishment in the nature of the sinner ; “ wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities ;” “ the Lord laying on Him the iniquity of all ;” that as “ in one man, Adam, all died, even so in Christ,” the second Adam, should “ all be made alive.”²

The work of such teachers “ would not abide, in the day that shall try every man’s work, of what sort it is :”³ it would show its own unsoundness, by the unsoundness of the fruits which grow from it : and *every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.* A man does not plant a tree, but for the purpose of obtaining fruit : and if no good fruit appear he loses his labour, and says to the husbandman ; “ Lo these three years I come to this fig tree, seeking fruit, and find none : Cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground ?”⁴ So with the prophets. If their doctrine do not bear the fruits of righteousness, lead to “ those good works which God hath ordained that we should walk in them,”⁵ it comes from a corrupt stock, not of the Lord’s planting ; and though the tree may be suffered for a while to disfigure his earthly vineyard, it can have no place in his everlasting kingdom.

Therefore “ believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God.”⁶ *Ye shall know them by their fruits.* “ For when they speak great words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them that live in error. Whilst they promise liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.”⁷

² Isa. liii. 5. ³ 1 Cor. iii. 13. ⁴ Luke xiii. 7. ⁵ Eph. ii. 10.

⁶ 1 John iv. 1.

⁷ 2 Pet. ii. 1, 18, 19.

LECTURE XXIV.

OBEDIENCE NECESSARY TO SALVATION.

MATT. vii. 21—23.

21. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

No one shall enter into the kingdom of everlasting glory, who does not *say unto Christ, Lord, Lord*. Christ is He "that liveth, and was dead; and has the keys of hell and of death:" and his words are, "Look unto me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth." For "the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son." "He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life."

Still, *not every one that saith unto Him, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of his Father which is in heaven*. For the purpose of coming to Christ, and calling Him Lord, is that we may be brought unto God, and reconciled. And we are brought to God and reconciled, not that we may oppose or disobey his will. It was disobedience to his will, that separated men from God at the first, and they must continue alienated as long as they continue disobedient. So that to say *unto Christ, Lord, Lord*, and not to *do the will of his Father*, is to contradict the Father's design in sending his Son into the world, and to set aside the purpose of the Son, in making an atonement for lost and sinful man. "He died unto sin," that we might "live unto righteousness." And therefore the first message of

¹ Rev. i. 18. ² Isa. xlv. 22. ³ John v. 22. ⁴ 1 John v. 12.

the Gospel was, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." "Mortify your members which are upon the earth," renounce "the works of the flesh;" "live after the Spirit," in righteousness, and godliness, and charity. "For this is the will of God, even our sanctification:" and whoever calls upon the Lord Jesus in the spirit of true and genuine faith, must make it the business of his life to fulfil this will: to watch against every departure from it, to seek for higher measures of grace, that he may daily approach nearer to it, and "go on unto perfection."

But even in the earliest days, we read of those who, like Simon the magician, were more willing to possess christian gifts, than to follow christian practices:⁵ who desired the privileges, without the conditions; and spoke of "continuing in sin, that grace might abound."⁶ All such have a solemn warning.

22. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"

23. "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

We can easily understand how one might *prophesy*, i. e. preach or teach in the name of Jesus, and yet be none of his; their "hearts going after their covetousness,"⁷ even whilst they were outwardly proclaiming the words of righteousness and truth. We know too that the Lord has made use of instruments such as Balaam, who have uttered the words which He has put into their mouth, whilst their hearts were far from Him.⁸ But we are startled to hear that men might *cast out devils, and do many wonderful works*, and yet not be true disciples of Him *in whose name* they were acting. St. Paul, however, saw no such difficulty:

⁵ Acts viii. 18.

⁷ Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

⁶ Rom. vi. 1.

⁸ Numb. xxi. 18.

for he says, "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." Therefore the gift of tongues and the gifts of healing might be granted for the special purpose of making the Gospel known, whilst the hearts of those who exercised these powers had never joined themselves to the Lord Jesus "in a perpetual covenant," and were yet in an unconverted state. We know, for instance, that Judas was unconverted. Yet there is no reason to suppose that when Jesus sent forth his Apostles to proclaim his coming, He withheld from Judas the powers which He gave to others. He said to him as to the rest, "Heal the sick, cast out devils."¹ Yet would He say to him at last, *I never knew thee.*

The true sign of his favour is taught us here. Not outward qualifications, but inward holiness. Not a gifted head, but a tender heart. We admire activity, and energy, and splendid talents: they may be useful, they may even be employed in the service of God, and help to carry out his purposes; yet they may exist without "the spirit of Christ:" and "the spirit of Christ," manifested by its fruits, is the true test by which his disciples are discerned: neither will He acknowledge those who, pretending to be his, "walk after the flesh,"² and are not "turned from their iniquities."

Indeed this sentence offers a solemn consideration to all who belong to the visible church, and "profess and call themselves Christians." We all *say unto Christ, Lord, Lord.* We bow at the name of Jesus: in his name we offer our petitions and claim his mediation. And we do well: for there is no other access to the Father, but by Him. The other part remains, that we *do the will of his Father.* Otherwise our profession is vain, and "we are yet in our sins."

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

² Ch. x. 8.

³ Rom. viii. 9.

They are the Lord's own words; *Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity.* "The Lord knoweth them that are his."³ But they that are his, "walk religiously in good works:" and whoever worketh iniquity, is known to Him indeed, fatally known, as Judas was known, to be "a son of perdition:"⁴ but he is not known as one who has been redeemed by his blood, renewed by his grace, and preserved by his love, that he may be "presented faultless" before the throne of God.⁵ For "they that are Christ's," and are known by Him as his people, have "crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."⁶ And this is their seal: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity."⁷

LECTURE XXV.

THE TRUE FOUNDATION.

MATT. vii. 24—29.

24. "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock :
 25. "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.
 26. "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand :
 27. "And the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

THE similitude in this passage is every way exact. Men build a house, looking to future time. And they look to future time, when they "take the yoke of

³ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

⁴ John xvii. 12.

⁵ See Jude 24.

⁶ Gal. v. 24.

⁷ 2 Tim. ii. 20.

Christ" upon them. They are in life, nay, in health, and in strength, but they look to the time of weakness, and of age, and of death, and of judgment : and against that season they lay a foundation and provide a refuge.

Neither is it enough, to lay a slight and inadequate foundation, and build what they may design to be a refuge. The man is called *wise*, who builds on a sure foundation, and lays it on a rock. Will a builder say, that because it is calm weather, or low water when he builds, he will neglect his foundation, and place his house on the sandy shore ? For a while indeed it might stand ; just as while a man is well, or prosperous, or busy, he may feel no alarm, be sensible of no danger, and find no want of a just title to religious confidence. But the house which stood secure while all was calm, rocks and totters when the storms arise. All within is hurry, confusion, and alarm. So it is with the *man who heareth these sayings and doeth them not* : who has named the name of Christ, and *said unto Him, Lord, Lord*, but has not made the Gospel his rule of life, nor been zealous to *do the will of his Father which is in heaven*. Such nominal religion is a sandy foundation, which will neither stand in the hour of death, nor in the day of judgment. It will not stand in the hour of death : for a man will feel reminded then of what he had before forgotten, that "without holiness no man can see the Lord ;" that the Saviour condemned those who "called Him Master and Lord," and "did not the things which He said."¹ Neither will it stand in the day of judgment : for Christ has Himself declared, that He will reply to such as trusted in their church to save them, and in their christian name to save them, and showed no other signs of being in his faith :—I never knew you, ye that work iniquity.

Here then is a sufficient reason why we should never be satisfied, as though "we had already attained,

¹ John xiii. 13.

either were already perfect ;” but should be constantly pressing onward in the course of obedience, and sanctification, and fervent zeal. Nothing else will avail in the season of trial. An inexperienced person might stand by an architect, who was clearing away the loose or sandy earth where a house was to be built, and was perhaps laying down arches or driving in piles, at a great expense of time and trouble ; he might see this, and ask, why so much labour should be employed on what was to be buried underground, and to make no part of the building. The answer is, —were we to build without a foundation, or not to make that foundation deep and strong, the house might endure for a while ; but when the wintry storms arise, and the swelling stream beats vehemently against it, that is, at the very season when you most need a safe and comfortable shelter, you would be forced to leave it, and go elsewhere for security.

So it is with regard to the state of the heart before God. While we are employed in the active concerns of life, and engaged in the daily business which occupies our minds, a slight stay is enough for a man ; he sees himself better than others, he sees others worse than himself ; he performs some religious duties, he does not often fall into gross sins ; so he lulls his conscience, and contents himself with a general hope that there is no need of more thought or more fear ; he trusts that he is within the christian covenant, and that God will receive him into his kingdom.

But the storm comes at some time or other ; the tempest of affliction, or of sickness, or of approaching death. This is the trial of religion, for it is against this trial that religion is to prepare us. And then the man who has made no more than a nominal profession of faith in Christ, and has never laboured to adorn his Saviour’s doctrine by a pure and holy conversation, by resisting the sin of his heart, by “abounding in the work of the Lord ;” he feels that this is no time for

deceiving his own soul, as he may have done hitherto, by vain words. He feels that a merely outward profession was not the faith intended by the command, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;" that it was not merely outward profession which Paul was making, when he "brought under his body, and kept it in subjection;" that outward profession is not the faith required by St. James, who insists that we "show our faith by our works;" that it is not outward profession which will be recompensed by the blessed words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Those who had *prophesied in the name of Christ, and cast out devils, and done many wonderful works*, had made more outward profession than he can have to show. Yet they are rejected; *depart from me, ye that work iniquity*.

Now, therefore, is the time for laying a foundation which will stand good at the last. We must not be satisfied, unless, when we look into ourselves and examine our lives, we have "the testimony of our conscience," that it has been our purpose, our prayer, our labour, to be "neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ:" but to add to our faith, virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and brotherly kindness, and charity.*

Observe, however, that there is nothing in this to contradict the general language of the Gospel; nothing to imply that a man's own righteousness is to be the ground of his confidence. This would indeed be to *build our house upon the sand*. "By grace we are saved; not of works, lest any man should boast."† But the truth here declared, is another truth, no less to be insisted on, that the practice of a Christian must be as peculiar as his faith; that the faith in which he professes to live, must shine in his actions, must speak in his words, must breathe in his spirit and temper. Then though the floods may come, and the winds blow,

* See 2 Pet. i. 5—8.

† Eph. ii. 9.

and the stream beat against your house, it shall not be shaken ; *for it is founded upon a rock.* For "though your earthly habitation is dissolved," you have a habitation secured for you in the heavens, whose builder and maker is God ; where no storms shall rage, no tempests ever threaten ; but all shall be a perpetual calm and sunshine, in the presence of God and of the Lamb.

28. "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine.

29. "For he taught them as one having authority ; and not as the Scribes."

THE END.

1



